Author:
John, Grace Claire

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Talking to learn in the literacy hour : patterns of didactic and informal talk and the development of reading, with particular reference to children learning English as an additional language

Talking to learn in the Literacy Hour: patterns of didactic and informal talk and the development of reading, with particular reference to children learning English as an additional language

Grace Claire John

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Abstract

This study of the 'Literacy Hour' researches how teachers in three Key Stage One classrooms approach the teaching of reading under the innovative, externally prescribed curriculum, introduced into schools in England and Wales in 1998. The Literacy Hour is delivered through 'interactive' whole class and group teaching methods, and the research focuses upon implications for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) as they are taught alongside their monolingual peers in the 'inclusive' classroom. The study thus considers their learning needs within broad principles of 'good practice' for literacy development identified by researchers as common to both bilingual and monolingual learners.

Through a 'grounded' approach, the initial phase of the research explores broadly how reading is developed in the three classes, and the possible implications of those practices observed for pupil learning. Taking forward key issues raised in the first phase, Phase Two focuses on didactic teacher-pupil discourse, studying both the balance of participation between teacher and pupils and the content of the talk itself during selected segments of the Literacy Hour. This part of the research partially replicates and extends previous research into Literacy Hour teacher-pupil discourse, but with some divergence in the findings and a more positive interpretation of the 'IRF' teaching exchange illustrated. Emerging from the analysis, three categories of teacher-pupil talk are developed, and it is suggested that these feature distinctive learning potential and model differing roles of the activity of reading to pupils.

Samples of informal talk arising between EAL learners and their peers while carrying out unsupervised Literacy Hour tasks are also included, with consideration given to ways in which this links to, and may support, the more formal tasks with which the children are engaged – in effect, it is suggested, constituting additional or alternative 'sites' for learning.

Dedication and acknowledgements

This work is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Catherine John

I am grateful, for their friendly co-operation, to the staff, pupils and parents at the school in which the study was based, and also to the EMAS and other LEA education staff who took part.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is solely my own, except where indicated by special reference in the text, and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree. Any views expressed in the dissertation are my own and in no way represent those of the University of Bristol.

Claire Shaw
29/7/03

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 The study in context

The introduction in 1998 of a daily 'Literacy Hour' in primary schools in England and Wales – part of the incoming Labour government's strategy to raise standards of literacy – did not represent a new phenomenon in terms of policy initiatives emanating from central government directed towards the education of children in their initial years of school. It did, however, feature an unprecedented degree of prescription with regard to both the content of the literacy curriculum and in the directives regarding the manner in which it was to be taught. Each class, from Reception to Year 6, would spend a dedicated daily 'Literacy Hour', in which they would move through a sequence of prescribed activities comprising 15 minutes 'shared text work', a further 15 minutes 'focused word work', 20 minutes 'group and independent work' and, finally, a 10 minute 'plenary'. An accompanying curriculum details the content of what is to be taught in each year group and directions are given regarding the teacher's role and the way in which the class is to be organised in each section of the hour.

Although schools are not statutorily bound to implement the National Literacy Strategy (NLS), those opting out are required to demonstrate the effectiveness of their alternative provision in terms of meeting national literacy targets, and in practice most schools have adopted the strategy. Its implementation has thus raised questions concerning the nature of what is being taught, and how, and there are also professional implications for teachers regarding the degree to which they are able to exercise their personal judgement in providing appropriate learning experiences for the particular needs of the pupils in their class.

Questions regarding the nature of the literacy curriculum for young children – what it should contain and the way in which it should be taught, cannot be regarded as 'neutral' areas of consensus. The discourses of the 1980s concerning differing approaches to the

teaching of reading – which may be briefly characterised as emphasising, on the one hand, the early acquisition of phonic and decoding skills, while on the other, the child's 'engagement' and active making of meaning from the text is foregrounded – erupted into fierce and public controversy during the early 1990s when it was alleged that a 'real books' approach to reading (featuring the latter approach) had led to a sharp downward trend in children's reading attainment (Turner, 1990). The controversy, which attracted national newspaper and television coverage, illustrated the lack of consensus amongst both teachers and educationists about how the development of initial reading skills should be approached.

The National Literacy Strategy was intended to foreclose these debates by taking a clear position on the teaching of reading and prescribing this for all schools (Wyse, 2000). However, with the implementation of the NLS, questions have continued to be raised concerning both the teaching of reading and related areas of the curriculum, including oral language and writing. Examples include: the perceived absence of an explicit research base for the strategy (Wray, 1999); a 'lack of developmentally appropriate practice' regarding early literacy teaching (Fisher, 2000; Wyse, 2002); weak justification for the emphasis on prescribed phonics teaching (Wyse, 2000); the failure in practice of the NLS to promote interactive teaching practices in which pupils have opportunities to question or explore ideas to help them regulate their own thinking (Mroz *et al*, 2000; English *et al*, 2002); the possibility that the NLS may be limiting student teachers' ability to construct frameworks for understanding the structure of subjects and, thereby, their ability to 'scaffold' children effectively (Twisleton, 1999, 2002).

Concerned with the needs of children learning English as an additional language (EAL), Cummins (2001) criticised 'the proliferation of top-down mandates' in both the UK and North America, which, in implementing the curriculum in a scripted way, fail to address what children need to become imaginative learners. Too heavy an emphasis upon discrete language skills for young second language learners is in danger of rendering the curriculum inaccessible to them as they progress through school. This is because discrete language skills do not generalise into 'academic language proficiency' – the ability to understand and produce increasingly complex oral and written language. In order to gain access to such language, maintains Cummins, children need to be immersed in literacy

through reading – and thus finding ways to encourage pupils to identify themselves as readers and to relate curriculum material to their lives is essential.

Inextricably bound to concerns such as those voiced above must be the positioning of teachers as professionals in the face of a curriculum which is highly prescriptive both in content and directions given for its delivery. Directions for delivery include detail of classroom organisation, timed activities and pupil grouping. All pupils are to be catered for under the same format, and while on one level this may be welcomed for the social inclusivity that it promotes, on another level it may result in particular needs not being met. These issues have pertinence for EAL learners – who form a particular focus for the present study. Given that pupils spend half of each day's Literacy Hour receiving whole-class teaching linked to a single text, it may be questioned how feasible it will be for those who are in the early stages of English acquisition to access these learning experiences. The group-work activities that follow on from the whole-class session require children to be divided into ability groups and while this might be viewed as facilitating effective 'differentiation' of learning experiences, there are implications concerning possible social marginalisation of particular groups of children. While various forms of differentiation are ubiquitous throughout schooling, they are often realised with more subtlety in practice, particularly in the early years of schooling when children are developing attitudes towards self and their own abilities.

There are, then, concerns on a number of levels regarding the NLS and its effects upon both teachers and children. This section has outlined some of these issues; the next section links them with a personal interest in the research area and the following section defines the field of study within these contexts.

1.2 Personal interest

The wider context described above encompasses some of the main concerns of my professional experience since qualifying as a teacher over two decades ago. The major part of this experience has taken place in a variety of inner-city multiethnic primary schools in several parts of southern England and the Midlands.

Teaching in London during the early 1980s, I became interested in newer approaches to literacy that were being developed within the Inner London Education Authority and introduced into some of the schools in which I worked in Hackney. Later, I was the English co-ordinator in a primary school which chose to work in this way. The approach, associated with researchers such as Clay (1982), Goodman (see Gollasch, 1982) and Smith (1978), took a 'developmental' view of learning and – with regard to developing reading skills – might be glossed as involving the child in actively making meaning (at their own level) in relation to a text which aspired to something more than the vehicle by which decoding skills might be rehearsed. These were often the 'real books' written and illustrated by children's authors which, in the subtlety of their written and illustrated text, repaid repeat readings during which familiarity with and understanding of the features of the printed text would be built up. Word recognition skills, phonic and grammatical knowledge would then be developed from within wider meanings and understandings that the child had already established. Enlarged books, for group and whole class teaching, played an important role in the development of reading skills. The NLS shares several facets of the approach – most visibly, in the use of enlarged texts to develop whole class (or group) reading skills. Other features, however, contrast – notably the particularly strong emphasis placed upon the learning of discrete aspects of phonic, word and grammatical knowledge from the Reception year onwards. And the positioning of the class teacher in relation to what and how she teaches provides another point of contrast.

During the past decade I have been employed in the field of multiethnic education, working in partnership with teachers to develop a curriculum addressing the language and learning needs of children for whom English is an additional language – within the inclusive classroom. Influential in the pedagogy of the multilingual classroom has been the work of Levine (see Meek, 1996) who argued that the needs of additional language learners are best served 'by being part of a "normal" class following the "normal" curriculum.' The rationale for this 'goes beyond language learning into the whole development of children: linguistic, cognitive, social, attitudinal: a rationale which does not isolate these for separate treatment' (*ibid* p 52). Levine goes on to draw an analogy with the teaching of reading 'where, if it is taught as if it were possible to learn it as an accretion of separate hierarchically arranged units, learners are deprived of the

opportunity of effectively bringing to the task their natural competencies'(*ibid*). She thus invokes a wider rationale than is fashionable amongst policy makers, working to the current target-driven agenda, for our purposes and practices in educating children.

It is from standpoints such as these, in which social and academic concerns are holistically integrated, that an interest in the new literacy curriculum and its impact upon schools, teachers and children learning in multi-ethnic classrooms arises.

1.3 The research 'issue'

Positioning the Literacy Hour within certain 'histories' of practice, as briefly outlined in the above two sections, produces a view of this new curriculum as offering a number of possibilities for EAL learners – some positive, but others perhaps more negative. The present study thus approaches the Literacy Hour in terms of an 'issue' to be explored, which will become more sharply focused 'through asking pertinent research questions' (Bassey, 1999:67). The 'issue', formulated into an over-arching question for the study, asks:

> What implications does the Literacy Hour have for the language and literacy development of EAL learners in multiethnic Key Stage 1[1] classrooms?

The section below places the study in a theoretical context and this is followed by an overview of the research approach taken and the different phases of the study itself – in which the more specific research questions that emerged as the research proceeded are stated.

1.4 Approaching the field of study

The study researches aspects of literacy development under the NLS format, with a particular strand concerning the learning experiences of children for whom English is an additional language. It takes as its focus an exploration of the particular learning environments that teachers establish through their verbal interactions with pupils during the Literacy Hour, and also those which pupils establish for themselves with their peers.

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[1] The term 'Key Stage 1', for the purposes of this study, includes the Reception year (4-5 year olds), Year One (5-6 year olds) and Year Two (6-7 year olds).

Current theories of learning – including those which address the needs of children learning English as an additional language – build on the work of Vygotsky (1962, 1978) and Bruner (1986) to stress the crucial role of language in cognitive development and the interactive socially orientated nature of the learning process. The notion of 'scaffolding' (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976) describes how the more experienced adult may extend children's learning – while Rogoff (1990) introduces the related term 'guided participation' to describe the ways in which more tacit interpersonal communication – as well as the more formal 'stage-setting' of children's activities – can aid cognitive development and she also examines the role that peer interaction can play in this process.

Research into classroom processes, however, has illustrated the tensions that can arise between aspiration and practice. Edwards & Mercer (1987), for example, reveal the dilemma for teachers who, adhering to Vygotskyan principles, had nevertheless, the task of inculcating a given body of curriculum knowledge. Children might not 'come up with' the 'right' answer and teachers were therefore forced to inculcate the knowledge while apparently eliciting it, by asking questions and simultaneously providing heavy clues to the answer – 'cued elicitation'.

There are thus likely to be similar tensions for teachers working to a highly detailed and prescriptive curriculum such as the NLS between:

> *the demands of... inducting children into an established ready-made culture and... developing creative and autonomous participants in a culture which is not ready-made but continually in the making.*
>
> (*op cit* p 163)

In examining classroom talk as the medium in which teaching and learning take place and the material from which learners actively construct their meanings, the study aims to identify the particular processes by which teachers and children are developing literacy within the confines of this new teaching framework, and to consider these strategies in relation to current theories of learning.

The study researches EAL learners within the context of their wider peer group rather than as a group for separate focus. A rationale for this has already been touched upon in

section **1.2** and in the classes in which the research took place, these children were invariably taught as part of the whole class group. Influential research into the language development of EAL learners is based upon a similar view of learning as that outlined above. The emphasis is on the importance of an 'interactive' classroom in which there is scope for genuine dialogue between pupils themselves and between pupils and their teacher (Cummins, 1988). A major factor in the academic success of these pupils is the degree to which learning takes place in an interactive rather than a passive environment (Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins, 1988). The present study explores the extent to which the Literacy Hour in practice (with documents that explicitly emphasise the importance of high quality interactive oral work) can be seen to provide such an environment for EAL learners – both in terms of their interactions with peers and with their teacher.

Opportunities for interaction between pupils and their peers arise during the 20 minute 'Group and independent work' section of the Literacy Hour. In this part of the hour, only one group of pupils will be working with the teacher, while the remainder of the class are expected to work independently – either individually or in pairs and groups. Wells and Chang-Wells (1992), researching multilingual classrooms, emphasise the need for classroom talk to offer children the opportunity for 'collaborative sense-making' with their peers. Collaborative talk is important for the development of 'literate thinking' – which 'exploit[s] the symbolic potential of external representation as an aid to the construction of inner meaning' (p 112) in both speech and writing. Talk about text is the key to the 'epistemic engagement' in thinking which is the evidence of real learning. Wells and Chang-Wells report upon the sustained involvement and active engagement that children are capable of when the potentially constraining presence of the teacher is absent. The present study, then, considers talk between pupils at this time and its potential for furthering their language and literacy development.

This section has situated the topic of study within a wider educational discourse; the following section positions this within the methods of enquiry.

1.5 Researching the Literacy Hour: overview of the study

The research, in the form of a case study, was conducted in the Key Stage 1 department of an inner-city primary school in which a third of the pupils spoke English as an additional language and in which I had previously worked as a 'Section 11' teacher[2]. An ethnographic approach was taken to the research, with classroom observation the central method for data collection, supplemented with interviews and documentary evidence. Additional interview data was collected from centrally based LEA education staff. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) consider qualitative and more generally ethnographic approaches to offer school-based research 'unique opportunities'. A qualitative orientation places individual actors at its centre, while ethnography provides 'an overall holistic framework for such an approach in terms of the kinds of data collected and the procedures employed to collect them' (p 25). Ethnography in education might include a focus upon school and classroom processes, organisation and culture, or about ways in which teacher and pupil expectations shape the learning environment (*ibid*). Applied to contexts such as these, qualitative research

> *... recognizes that what goes on in our schools and classrooms is made up of complex layers of meanings, interpretations, values and attitudes. Schools, classrooms and their participants have histories and careers, teachers and pupils have their own educational and life histories...responses to innovation and institutionalization ensure that schools and classrooms have cultures and an ethos. A firm understanding of these variables and the ways in which they interact to create the politics and dynamics of educational change requires a qualitative appreciation of these factors.*
>
> (*ibid* p 26)

There are two main stages to the study. Commencing at the same time that the Literacy Hour was implemented nationally in schools, the initial stage – Phase One – was largely exploratory, seeking to observe the new curriculum in practice and to gain insights into its impact upon teachers and pupils. Accordingly, interviews with teachers and other education staff were also carried out at this time. In particular, this stage of the enquiry aimed to capture the 'character' of the language and literacy experiences of pupils during

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[2] The term 'Section 11', very broadly, refers to teachers employed by Local Education Authorities (LEA's) to support EAL and other minority ethnic pupils' educational needs. 'Section 11' refers to the section of the 1966 Local Government Act through which part of the funding (in the form of grants to local authorities from the Home Office) for this work came. Since 1999, funding for the work has been devolved directly to schools under the 'Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant' (EMAG). Teachers employed under this funding in the LEA in which the present research took place are identified as 'EMAG teachers'.

the Literacy Hour and to consider these in relation to the needs of EAL learners. Thus a 'grounded' approach was taken to the observations that form the core of this study, with an initially widely focused 'guiding' research question:

> What is the nature of the language and literacy experiences of pupils during the Literacy Hour; are these facilitating of accepted 'good practice' for multilingual classrooms? (RQ 1)

From the initial observations, several areas of interest emerged and these in turn generated additional, more focused, research questions concerned, particularly, with didactic talk between teachers and pupils and the ways in which reading was being developed – but also including talk amongst pupils themselves. These issues were then taken forward to Phase Two of the study. The second phase of the study focuses upon the learning 'discourses' of the Literacy Hour – between teachers and pupils and those occurring between pupils and their peers.

While researchers have examined classroom talk from a number of perspectives, this study is more distinctive in considering teacher-pupil talk which has been, in a sense, externally shaped: teachers following the NLS directives may be seen as tailoring their discourse to the Literacy Hour 'script'. Through classroom observations and analysis of accompanying audio-recordings, the study traces the particular views of learning inherent in the teacher-pupil discourse and ways in which these relate to reading development. The main research questions for this phase of the study were:

> What specific ways do teachers interact with their pupils to develop reading; what patterns of verbal interaction can be identified, and how can these be characterised in terms of potential pupil learning? (RQ 2)

> What perspectives on the reading process are modelled in these Literacy Hour teaching practices? (RQ 3)

In order to unpack such complexities, an interpretive analysis of the classroom discourse was undertaken – through detailed commentary on transcriptions of teacher-pupil discourse. The analysis is supplemented by more quantitative data detailing levels of pupil involvement (including that of the EAL learners) in the discourse – provided by applying a modified version of Sinclair & Coulthard's (1992) discourse analysis

framework to the teacher-pupil talk[3]. Thus the study aimed to consider the ways in which the Literacy Hour classroom provided an 'interactive' environment for pupils.

The informal talk arising between EAL pupils and their peers was captured on audiotape during recordings of Literacy Hour planned activities. Published research investigating classroom talk between peers has tended to concentrate on talk emanating from what might be described as 'pedagogically-orchestrated' situations (e.g. Wells & Chang Wells, 1992; Barnes & Todd, 1977). However, the Literacy Hours observed in this study did not feature collaborative talk as an explicitly planned activity, although quiet talk, which did not interfere with the accomplishment of the tasks that children were engaged with, was sanctioned by all teachers. In researching the 'interactive' Literacy Hour classroom, then, the informal naturally occurring talk that arose between children and their peers as they worked on their tasks – and the opportunities this offered for learning – became the focus. The study thus builds on existing research and, through examples of the children's talk, gives insights into peer group talk, EAL learning and the particularity of its relationship to the more formal didactic concerns of the classroom. The main research question for this stage of the study was:

> What are the features of children's peer group talk during Independent Work and how can this talk be characterised in terms of potential pupil learning?
> (RQ 4)

This talk was also explored through a qualitative approach – with detailed analysis of transcribed sections of discourse considering its potential for furthering children's learning.

1.6 Organisation of the thesis

In taking a grounded approach towards studying the new curriculum, the design of the study was emergent, rather than wholly predetermined, in order to allow for flexibility and adjustment as the research proceeded. This is reflected in the organisation of the thesis, with particular methodological considerations addressed at each phase, rather than prefacing the study as a whole. An outline of the research project has been given in the previous introductory section (**1.5**) to enable a view of this as a whole to be gained, and

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[3] This part of the study partially replicates, and extends, research into the Literacy Hour by Mroz *et al* (2000).

the following section (**1.6.1**) gives a summary of the data collected. More detailed consideration of case study methodology is addressed in the initial Literature Review, section **2.4**. Particular strategies, and consideration of their implications, are detailed in the introductory chapters to the two phases of the research (Chapters 3 and 7). Likewise, literature pertinent to the study in progression is reviewed at two points. A review of responses to the introduction of the Literacy Hour prefaces Phase One, while the main literature review for the study prefaces Phase Two. (A brief consideration of literature particularly pertinent to the analysis of teacher-pupil talk – the subject of Chapter 8 – is also outlined out at the beginning of that chapter.)

The main 'guiding' research questions have been stated in the above section; however, a number of 'focusing' questions arose during the course of the research, and these, (along with the 'guiding' questions), are listed in Appendix 1.

1.6.1 Summary of data collected

In order to facilitate an overview of the data collected/analysed over the study as a whole, the tables below provide a summary. Table 1.1 shows the data collected during Phase One – the 'exploratory' stage of the research, addressing Research Question 1.

Table 1.1 Summary of Phase One data: Jan 1999 – Mar 2000

School based data	LEA data	DfEE data
Classroom observations: *Autumn/Spring Terms 1999/2000* (Usually) 1 observation per week, rotating between the 3 classes. ***Interviews:* class teachers (3)** *Autumn Term 1999* One per teacher - semi-structured; undertaken during fourth term of NLS implementation . ***Interviews*: parents (11)** *Spring Term 1999:* Structured interviews with parents of EAL learners: second term of NLS. ***Documentation*** Curriculum Plans Pupil Language Levels Pupil Ability Groupings	*Interviews* *Autumn 1999; Spring 2000* Semi-structured interviews conducted during fourth and fifth terms of NLS implementation: ***Literacy Consultant* (1)** ***Section 11/EMAS Team* (2)** (Team Leaders) ***Section 11/EMAS Team* (1)** (Language support teacher)	*Documents* NLS *Framework* NLS Modules 1-4, 'Teacher's Notes'

Table 1.2 is concerned with the more focused research taking place in Phase Two of the study – part one of this phase concerned with didactic teacher-pupil talk (addressing Research Questions 2 and 3), and part two with the informal, unsupervised talk between pupils themselves (Research Question 4).

***Table 1.2** Summary of Phase Two data: Oct 2000 – Mar 2001*[4]

Phase Two: Part One	**Phase Two: Part Two**
Classroom observations (audio- recorded) Reception: 4 Literacy Hours in a single week Year One: 4 Literacy Hours in a single week Year Two: 4 Literacy Hours in a single week ***Classroom observations subjected to detailed analysis*** In each of the three classes: 1 Shared Text Work session 1 Focused Word Work session 1 Guided Reading session	***Classroom observations (audio-recoded)*** 4 extracts of pupil peer group talk from the Independent Work segments of the Literacy Hour – collected during recordings of Literacy Hours in Phase One and Phase Two of the research.

1.6.2 Research time scale

1998 Autumn Term: Approached school with request to carry out research

1999 Spring Term: Interviews with parents
Summer Term: Several informal observations of Literacy Hours
Autumn Term: Weekly classroom observations in the 3 classes
Interviews with class teachers and LEA staff

2000 Spring Term: Continued observations and interviews
Summer Term: (Writing up exploratory Phase One study)
Autumn Term: Recording Literacy Hour 'weeks' in Years One and Two

2001 Spring Term: Recording Literacy Hour 'week' in Reception Class
Summer Term: Continuing analysis

(October 2001 – October 2002: Writing up account of research)

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[4] While Literacy Hour 'weeks' in Year One and Year Two were recorded during the Autumn Term 2000, recording in the Reception class was delayed until the Spring Term, when the Literacy Hour in this class was in full operation.

1.7 Resume of thesis chapters

This section concludes Chapter One, with short summaries of the chapters that make up the rest of the thesis.

Phase One

Chapter 2 provides a context for the project through a review of published responses to the Literacy Hour, those included addressing themes linking with concerns of the present study. The chapter also broadly outlines the research literature informing the approach taken.

Chapter 3 introduces Phase One of the project - the Exploratory Study – describing the research setting (the school, its organisation, pupils, teacher and wider community) and the methods used to carry out the research.

Chapter 4 considers Literacy Hour talk – both observations of a didactic nature between teachers and pupils, and the talk arising informally between pupils and their peers as they worked independently of the teacher. The second part of the chapter discusses the model of Reading portrayed by the *Framework* and how each teacher translated this into practice.

Chapter 5 summarises and reflects upon the findings from the Exploratory Study and the issues that emerged from this for further consideration and study in Phase Two of the study.

Phase Two: Part 1

Chapter 6 contains the main literature review, in which the theoretical orientation for the study is established and discussed in terms of the two key areas for the research – the role of talk in learning and the teaching of Reading in multilingual classrooms.

Chapter 7 introduces the first part of the second phase of the project, in which teacher-pupil talk relating to the development of Reading was studied. Previous research on the specific topics to be studied is outlined and then the research approach is delineated.

Chapter 8 describes and analyses the Shared Text Work sessions of the Literacy Hour observed in the three classes.

Chapter 9 describes and analyses the Guided Reading sessions observed in the three classes.

Chapter 10 draws together the main findings from the previous two chapters and discusses these with reference to previous studies of teacher-pupil discourse during the Literacy Hour. The findings are then developed into categories of teacher-pupil talk in connection with Reading development, and consideration given to their implications for learning.

Phase Two: Part 2

Chapter 11 addresses talk arising between pupils as they carry out their Literacy Hour tasks in the absence of the teacher. First, other studies of informal talk between pupils are outlined, and then the approach to the present study is described, followed by the study itself. Finally, the implications of such talk for pupil development are considered. The final section expands upon these implications in a more theoretical manner, positioning pupil peer-group talk within a reconceptualised 'zone of proximal development'.

Chapter 12 concludes the thesis, with a summary and discussion of the main findings and their implications and pointers for further research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review: Part 1

2.1 Introduction

This initial review of literature aims to provide a context for the exploratory stage of the study through a consideration of some published responses to the introduction of the Literacy Hour. These do not comprise an exhaustive survey of such literature, but rather were selected to reflect themes pertinent to the present research: inclusive educational practices; interpretations of 'literacy'; theories of learning/styles of teaching; and the role of 'speaking and listening'. They thus provide a 'backdrop' for the present study in its initial broad view of the Literacy Hour.

The first section summarises the more practical concerns of two teaching organisations with members who had been directly involved in the pilot phase of implementation, and who thus had experience of potential issues arising for national implementation of the Literacy Hour. Following this, responses from individuals are reviewed – in which more fundamental issues concerning the NLS are discussed. The final section of the chapter considers literature addressing the research design of the present study.

2.2 Responses by teaching organisations: practical issues

This section outlines responses made directly prior to national implementation of the Literacy Hour by the National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE) and the National Association for Language Development In the Curriculum (NALDIC). The latter organisation addresses the needs of children speaking English as an additional language. Initial reactions from both organisations were mixed.

Moss (1998), on behalf of NATE, canvassing a group of members with direct involvement in the first stage of the Strategy's implementation, reported both positive and negative features. Positive features included a welcome for the use of a balance of

strategies in the teaching of reading; for the use of high quality and wide ranging literature in the classroom; and on the clarity of the NLS objectives – which, it was felt, should assist schools to be more focused on medium term planning. Less positive was the 'overwhelming' detail of the documentation, an INSET package 'variable in quality' providing for 'a disembodied transmission model of training' and a view that rigid interpretation of the Literacy Hour could lead to increased use of decontextualised tasks and activities. This last point was especially significant for pupils 'who particularly need access to meaningful texts and activities to make progress in literacy, including those with EAL.'

Major perceived weaknesses highlighted in the NATE report included the compartmentalisation of objectives into years and terms and the rigid application of these to year groups – thus precluding repetition and revisiting of the curriculum for pupils that need it. The 'prescriptiveness' might also have a negative effect by breeding a 'dependency culture and delivery curriculum'. Other negative features mentioned included the poor coverage to speaking and listening, multilingualism, drama, media and assessment and that the *Framework*:

> *...does not take account of needs of pupils with EAL who enter the system other than in Reception, and the NLS does not recognise other issues for pupils with EAL, such as the need for active listening opportunities for beginners in English.* (p 9)

Finally, it was felt that the NLS documentation offers an inadequate account of the contribution of reader response to developing literacy.

Addressing the needs of EAL learners specifically, NALDIC produced a similar early response to the introduction of the Literacy Hour from members working within the pilot National Literacy Project (1998). They reported positively on the opportunities it offered for clearly focused language work which would benefit bilingual pupils. Concerns were expressed, however, about the structure and implementation of the Literacy Hour and the effects on the achievement of bilingual pupils.

Particular issues included the assumption, in the *Framework for Teaching*, that all pupils will have been through the school system building up experience from Reception to Year

6 – there is thus no provision for new arrivals, casual admissions and those with interrupted schooling. The prescribed termly content may not match all pupils' learning needs at that particular time and it is difficult to organise repetition and revisiting for pupils who need it. There was also the danger that the requirements could lead to decontextualised tasks and activities that will not support EAL learners, who need to understand the meaning of the language they are learning in context. The realisation in practice of the need to have high expectations for pupils learning EAL might also be compromised by the format of pupil grouping in the Literacy Hour – this must take account of the distinction between EAL learning needs and special educational needs.

Another area of concern was the speed of implementation and volume of preparation required for five literacy hours a week, which can lead to poor provision for EAL learners – teaching pupils at different stages of learning English in multilingual classrooms requires very careful planning, points out the document, and it is important to allow time for this and to utilise the expertise of EAL specialists.

Summary

There was, then, a welcome for some aspects of the NLS – in particular the greater clarity of focus in teaching practice, which, with regard particularly to language work, would be beneficial to EAL learners. However, both organisations raise concerns about the perceived narrowness of the prescribed curriculum and also about the nature of the learning experiences that will result from the NLS model and whether these will be appropriate for the needs of all pupils. A number of the issues raised here arise also in the following section.

2.3 Individual responses to the NLS

In this section four individual responses are considered, each discussing in detail particular issues regarding the NLS. These are also key issues for the present study and concern: Bourne (2000) in relation to 'inclusion', Hilton (1998) with regard, particularly, to the interpretation of 'literacy', Corden (1999) on 'Speaking and Listening' and Fisher (2000) in relation to teaching and learning styles.

Bourne viewed the advent of the NLS within what she describes as a 'new pedagogic' culture in the UK. With a long professional background in the field of EAL learning in mainstream school contexts, she welcomed the NLS, particularly in its promotion of inclusive practices by which it 'strongly challenges the acceptance of failure in the school system for children from underprivileged groups' (p 39). It represents, she considers, a shift away from the child-centred education practices legitimised by the Plowden Report in which 'the curriculum is implicit, the criteria for success are implicit, and evaluation and assessment are implicit'. Bourne evokes Bernstein's notion of the 'masked' or 'hidden' power in the transmission of knowledge that such pedagogy produces, featuring apparently weak classification (or boundaries) between subject areas and weak 'framing' (or pace). Children who have been brought up using the same codes at home are thus privileged, since they are able to infer the underlying ordering principles of the school curriculum; the result of such pedagogy, however, is 'to perpetuate inequalities in society, and to naturalize the unequal distribution of life chances as if they were innate differences in ability or intelligence' (p34).

The NLS sets out a contrasting 'highly visible' pedagogy, with the focus on transmission and the teacher's role in ensuring that learning takes place. The aim is that *all* children (apart from the few with severe learning difficulties) will reach the standards for literacy to be expected of their age group – thus:

> *...the focus has been shifted from the progressivist spotlight on the individual and the individual's progress to the progress of the cohort as a year group – on working to bring the whole class to shared understandings, and on modeling for the whole class those practices which are valued (and examinable) in order to give access to them for all children.*
>
> (p 38)

Bourne observes that the NLS does not, therefore,

> *... accept a bell curve of differential performance explained by innate ability, nor that a wide range of performance is an inevitable result of social inequalities. The focus is on the whole year cohort achieving together... Those active in the masked pedagogy and the underachievement of schooling in meeting the needs of all children must recognize and applaud the drive for justice embedded in the programme.*
>
> (pp 38-9)

This, for Bourne, is the most positive point of the exercise. The NLS pedagogy is strongly classified, distinguishing between subject areas and between parts of the

teaching day and it is also strongly framed in its sequencing and its pacing within the Literacy Hour itself. Within the NLS *Framework*, the curriculum year by year and term by term is made explicit and publicly available and by publicising its aims and methods for home use, involving parents in transmission and assessment and encouraging both parents and children to be aware of targets for literacy and involved in the setting of targets for each child, the strategy has an empowering potential for learners.

Bourne thus welcomes the NLS and, in contrast to those who regard it as a form of straitjacket for teachers, her view is of '...a postmodern melange, offering something for all tastes, with little in the range of current school practices disallowed so long as phonics is also included, although the pacing and regulation of activities is much stronger than previously' (p 40). She sounds a note of caution, however, based upon her early observations of school-based implementation; it is, she says, possible to draw out two different approaches to the NLS. In the ideal, expectations for all children are high and through whole class interactive teaching and focused small group tuition, teachers seek to access for all children models of explicitly valued types of texts and ways of reading and interpreting them. In the other, apparently widespread approach to the strategy, test results are used to set up fixed ability groupings, ' thus confirming and constructing different levels of ability through the different curricula and ways of reading and writing being taught to each group' (p 40).

While welcoming the possibilities enshrined within the NLS, Bourne cautions against what she terms the 'technicist fix' that it could also come to embody. She cites Bernstein's view of the emergence, during the 20th Century, of a new concept of knowledge and its relation to those who create it which sees knowledge as a disembodied commodity, separated from 'inwardness, commitment and personal dedication', to be envisaged as flowing freely like international finance, from place to place. It can be packaged and transmitted at a distance (Bourne cites the NLS training programme for schools) and thus becomes more cost efficient, freed from specific time and space, open to large numbers and seen as context free. Such 'technical rationality' applied to teaching and learning focuses on what is taught on the assumption that what is taught is what is learned, and assumes a natural progression of learning through the taught

curriculum. The formal institutional pedagogic process is anonymously produced by faceless committees and so knowledge is produced that is separated from commitment and from physical location, focusing on skills, standards and competencies. Such an approach avoids seeing education as essentially 'embodied', as the engagement of human beings in institutionalised places.

There is a need to find a way of 'disrupting the technical fix', and a potential way forward lies in the re-embodying of education (McWilliam, 1995) as 'an engagement somebody has with other bodies in institutional spaces'. Teaching and learning are conceived in terms of engagement with commitment, emphasising the role of the stance of the teacher as well as the content of what is taught. This, according to Bourne, is an issue which has been strongly underplayed in discussions of what makes an effective teacher. McWilliam, 'calls for us to focus on the desire of one to teach and on the desire of the other to learn, and on the interaction between transmitters and acquirers, and...the negotiation of these shifting roles in interaction'. The approach, says Bourne, when it takes in the social positioning of 'bodies', may offer us a transformative discourse of education.

While the new pedagogic order offers positive as well as negative potential for Bourne, others have been unequivocal in their view. Hilton (1998) viewed it as 'an undeveloped heavy-armoured vehicle driving roughshod over existing primary practice' and 'return[ing] the primary schoolday to a Victorian model, with one hour of literacy instruction and forty-five minutes of arithmetic.' Where, she asked:

> *have the long, quiet, concentrated periods of writing and reflection gone...indeed, when is any extended piece of writing by an autonomous learner going to take place? ...the old embedded idea that stories in primary school need to be enacted and embodied, lived and explored as wholes has become threatened...deep and long stories do not fit a Literacy Hour structure...the new Literacy Hour...is a return to authoritarian oral instruction based on texts chosen by the teacher from a set scheme; much of the instruction is at 'word level' and involves constant interrogation of the pupils. The domestic curriculum of the child is ignored and the child's existing body of knowledge made irrelevant.*
>
> (p 5)

Effective English work in primary schools cannot be reduced to a set of skills and delivered through pre-packaged materials, maintained Hilton.

> *Both language and children confound such preconceptions. They are both, as it were, alive: difficult and slippery. The interface between them is full of complexities, passions and prejudices. As a result primary teachers have learned to work in cunning and complex ways. They have worked to infiltrate literacy learning into other areas of the curriculum...sought texts that yield pleasure and allowed time for that pleasure to ripen...learned that it is good practice to involve children in large stories and projects which stretch their imaginations and their talents...most centrally, they have learned to build sensitively on what each child knows already.*
>
> (p 6)

Hilton, citing Street (1997), thus criticises the 'autonomous'[1] model of literacy enshrined in the NLS as lacking 'any helpful cultural relativism'. Speaking of the 'real and inescapable correlation between literacy attainment and social and economic status', she maintains that if we wish 'poorer' children to read and write more confidently, '*firstly* in the language of their home communities and *then* successfully in the patterns of the dominant literacy, we must...consider [and incorporate into school practice] the ways they are already "reading" their culture – ways that often do not translate easily into the school practices of reading and writing.' She thus evokes an alternative anthropological model of literacy – such as that of Heath (1983) – in which teachers themselves became ethnographers of the literacy practices and events with which the children that they teach are engaged.

Hilton, then, is strongly critical of the conceptual basis upon which the NLS is built, regarding it as an initiative that is 'deskilling' of teachers and as embracing practices which will lead to impoverished and ineffective literacy experiences for pupils. Other commentators focused on specific facets of the Literacy Hour for attention.

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[1] Street (*ibid*) defines this as

> *...the view that literacy in itself has consequences irrespective of, or autonomous of, context. In contrast with this view, I have posed an 'ideological' model of literacy, which argues that literacy not only varies with social context and with cultural norms and discourses regarding, for instance, identity, gender and belief, but that its uses and meanings are always embedded in relations of power. It is in this sense that literacy is always 'ideological' – it always involves contests over meanings, definitions and boundaries and struggles for control of the literacy agenda* (p 48).

Corden (1999), contrasting the work and research devoted to speaking and listening during the past 30 years with its 'neglect' in the present NLS wrote,

> *Ironically, although the Framework...recognises the importance of speaking and listening as, 'an essential part of it [literacy]', it does not address the issue. Nor does it include speaking and listening in the planning of work for literacy, despite the fact that shared and group reading and writing and independent group work (major features of the Literacy Hour), depend heavily on the quality of interactive discourse.'*
>
> (p104)

It is regrettable, he continues, that having emphasised the centrality of talk, the DfEE chose to exclude 'Speaking and Listening' from the National Literacy *Framework*. Despite the general acceptance of a 'constructivist' approach to teaching – and that proponents of the NLS argue that it includes major elements of constructivist learning, such as 'modelling', 'demonstrating' and 'scaffolding' – speaking and listening, the 'very essence of constructivist learning, is not dealt with'. Although the Literacy Training Pack offers suggestions for teaching, the accompanying videos 'present some dubious examples of teacher-pupil interaction, more redolent of the asymmetric discourse pattern so soundly condemned by educationalists as being ineffective and inefficient' (*ibid*). Within a prescribed framework supported by 'official worksheets', speaking and listening may thus become marginalised with resulting arid, instrumental teaching. Whole class lessons that should be 'discursive and interactive' are more likely, suggests Corden, to resemble lessons characterised by teacher dominated discourse and low order questions, as reported in the ORACLE Survey (Galton et al, 1999).

The concern expressed by both Hilton and Corden regarding teaching style and pupil learning is echoed in Fisher's (2000) critique of the NLS, in which she questions the introduction of a national teaching strategy for all ages from five to eleven. In her view, the strategy provides an inflexible model for teachers to work with and fails to acknowledge that the needs of children may be different or that the teacher may want to adapt her teaching to the needs of the class. In particular, 'the lack of developmentally appropriate practice' in the early teaching of literacy may compromise the long term goals of high literacy standards.

Recent government policy, noted Fisher, has reduced the definition of 'early years' from the internationally recognised 0-8 years to 0-5 years, and 'enforced a more and more formal education programme on young children'. She quotes international and UK research and theory concerned with early years education to argue that children develop literacy behaviour as well as other behaviours along a continuum and that the different stages of development exhibited by children in a given class will require the teacher to estimate 'where each child is developmentally and build...on that base...instruction will need to be adapted to account for children's differences' (p 61). The NLS, however, with a format common to both Key Stages 1 and 2, represents a view of effective literacy teaching as a 'homogeneous concept' rather than developmentally appropriate.

Fisher takes issue with Beard (1999), whose review of research and inspection evidence underpinning the NLS, argues strongly for the importance of the Strategy in the reception class. In support of this, Beard cites Tizard *et al* (1988), whose research found that children made relatively more progress in literacy learning between beginning school and the end of the reception year than they did in the other infant years. Fisher, however, notes how different the type of education of the researched children was to that under the NLS format. She quotes Tizard's observation of similarities with nursery classes:

> *They would have many of the same play activities – water play, sand play, creative activities...laid out in a similar fashion to the nursery...children would be engaged in different activities from each other, rather than all working on the same task or even the same subject area. The teacher would constantly be moving around the classroom, helping and guiding each child with their particular work, and only very rarely standing at the front of the class and teaching the group as a whole.*
>
> (p 34)

In common with Hilton, then, Fisher argues for 'the experienced professional to exert professional judgement in her choice of teaching strategies'. However, her critique of the NLS does not preclude a welcome for aspects of the NLS: in common with Bourne (*op cit*) she considers the principles underpinning the hour 'are in many ways laudatory', the format supporting inclusion and encouraging teachers to have high expectations of all pupils so that those who, in the past, might have been excluded from sharing high quality texts are now able to contribute orally to discussions. Instruction strategies drawing on

fundamental principles of learning such as scaffolding and modelling are also praised by Fisher as is the focus on large scale in-service training for teachers.

2.3.1 Summary and discussion

For the present study, concerned with the literacy development of young EAL learners within their wider peer group, the views above raise issues connected with inclusion, teaching styles/child development, and models of literacy. These issues are incorporated within the summary and discussion of the present section below.

Inclusion. As welcomed by Bourne (2000) and Fisher (2000), teaching practices that provide inclusive learning experiences, encompassing the needs of all children within the whole class group (as opposed to separating some off for separate teaching or withdrawing them from the class altogether), can be viewed as a particularly positive aspect of the Literacy Hour format and are commensurate with principles of established good practice for EAL learners (see Chapter 6). However, as cautioned by Bourne, the ability grouping format of the Literacy Hour may serve to segregate EAL learners *within* the class itself, confining them to what may be impoverished models of literacy.

Another positive 'inclusive' facet of the Literacy Hour for Bourne is the opportunity for involvement of parents. However, this appears to be rather narrowly conceptualised – in terms of supporting the achievement of the school's pre set literacy targets, rather than (for example) incorporating home literacy practices within the class curriculum.[2]

Theories of learning. For each writer, the nature of the engagement between teacher and pupil is emphasised as of crucial importance for successful learning. However, while Bourne considers the NLS model, properly interpreted, to be capable of effectively meeting the needs of all children, other commentators raise doubts. The main basis for these is a concern that the degree of prescription regarding both teaching style and curriculum content produces an inflexible model of teaching practice that will preclude

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[2] Research carried out in the present study, in which parents of EAL learners at Key Stage One were interviewed (see section 3.3), revealed that 1 term after implementation of the NLS only one parent (out of 11 interviewed) had any knowledge of the Literacy Hour. This parent, literate in English, said that she *thought* she had read something about it in the school's newsletter; however, she was unable to expand beyond this. This raises questions regarding how schools work to involve parents – information in newsletters and pamphlets (even when translated into community languages) does not always 'reach' its intended audience.

teachers being able to build upon what Hilton terms the child's 'domestic curriculum' and existing body of knowledge. Such a (generally accepted) 'constructivist' view of learning will, as pointed out by Fisher, involve the teacher using her professional judgement to estimate where each child is developmentally and to build upon that base, adapting instruction to account for children's differences. Although the Literacy Hour format features some elements of a constructivist style – 'scaffolding' and 'modelling' are proposed in the *Framework,* for example – the homogeneity of its application is developmentally inappropriate. Further, Corden points out that the 'very essence' of constructivist learning – speaking and listening – is not dealt with by the *Framework.* There is, then, a need to examine actual classroom practice – what is the nature of teacher-pupil interaction, and are teachers able to provide 'developmentally appropriate' learning experiences for young EAL learners within the whole class context of a Literacy Hour format?

'Literacy'. Regarding the subject of 'literacy' itself, how it is to be defined and taught, Bourne observes that with the advent of the NLS, the focus is now upon 'form'. The discourse of the NLS is 'Literacy', rather than 'English' or 'Language', and the concern is with the skills associated with reading and writing rather than literature *per se.* Feelings, emotions, self-expression and the discussion of moral values are all downplayed although, she says, these are still implicitly transmitted – though not the subject of curriculum focus and discussion. The spotlight is on communication, technologising reading, in contrast to the previous progressivist emphasis on sensibility and creative expression. While Bourne notes this changed focus, but does not offer an explicit value judgement upon it, Hilton is particularly scathing about this aspect of the NLS and the accompanying loss of opportunity for immersed literacy experiences.

Raising standards. Bourne and Hilton thus offer differing interpretations on the efficacy of the NLS as a cure for the 'long tail of failure' of children from the poorest socio-economic groups. Bourne views factors such as the emphasis on the whole year cohort achieving together, the visible, transparent nature of the curriculum with its focus on form, the linking of home/school practices and the accompanying publicity encouraging parental involvement in target setting and assessment as offering real possibilities for

raising standards. Hilton, on the other hand, is critical of the model of literacy propounded by the strategy:

> *If 'literacy' is configured as 'quantity' – something that can be increased by commitment, money, better teaching, etc. – then the amount of literacy is, by its very nature, going to vary structurally across the different socio-economic groups in society. There are, by definition, always going to be low-achieving pupils. In other words, if it is configured as a commodity which one can always buy more of, then the rich and the powerful are always going to get more.*
>
> (p 12)

Thus, while Bourne welcomes the new pedagogy and its aim of raising achievement of *all* children – as countering the old pedagogy which naturalised the unequal distribution of life chances as if they were innate differences in ability or intelligence – Hilton regards such aspirations as being set up to fail, because the quantitative model 'disguises a societally structured "lack" as an individual problem with learning.' For '...*all* children to attain more, to be more literate, and for all schools to be more effective, then it is important to define and measure those achievements in ways *that allow them to be indeed possible for all people.*' For Hilton, this is not to be found in such an 'autonomous' model.

<u>Reflection</u>

Considering, then, the increased emphasis that the Literacy Hour places upon the teacher's didactic role in the development of children's literacy, and also upon 'form', it might be questioned what place there will be for children to articulate and work with their personal understandings and responses to the literature that they read? How can this be catered for within a whole class or small group format? And to what extent will the literature selected reflect and build upon the diverse backgrounds and experiences of children in multicultural classrooms? These questions are important for a social constructivist view of learning, in which the teacher will build upon children's *established* understandings; success in mastering the more mechanical aspects of reading and writing emphasised by the NLS will be dependant upon the teacher positioning the teaching of these within the context of wider meanings established from the ideas contained in the text itself. Such a (social constructivist) theory of learning is developed

in the main Literature Review, Chapter 6. The issues raised above inform the questions for the exploratory Phase One of the present study, described in the following chapters.

Research that aims to explore, uncover what is happening and to shed fresh light – as implied in the questions posed above – will require a strategy facilitating detailed observation of the interactions between teacher and pupils during the Literacy Hour. Qualitative case study, involving a small number of naturally-occurring cases, offers the opportunity for such exploration and rich description of individual cases. The final section of this review addresses the broad literature and issues connected with this approach.

2.4 Methodological considerations for the present study

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) have argued that qualitative case study is in many ways the most appropriate format and orientation for school-based research, and the one which offers most to teachers, since its principal rationale is that of reproducing social action in its natural setting – such as classrooms – and it can be used to develop new theory or improve and evaluate existing professional practice. Case studies are particularly valuable, they observe, when the investigator has little control over events or when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.

Case study has been defined as a detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1989; Stake, 1994), and by Adelman *et al* (1980) as 'the study of an instance in action'. Evolving, then, around the in-depth study of a single event or a series of linked cases over a defined period of time, the researcher tries to locate the 'story' of a certain aspect of social behaviour in a particular setting and the factors influencing the situation; in this way themes, topics and key variables may be isolated (Hitchcock and Hughes, *op cit*, p 317). A case study is thus likely to have the following characteristics:

- *A concern with the rich and vivid description of events within the case.*
- *A chronological narrative of events within the case.*
- *An internal debate between the description of events and the analysis of events.*
- *A focus upon particular individual actors or groups of actors and their perceptions.*
- *A focus upon particular events within the case.*

- *The integral involvement of the researcher in the case.*
- *A way of presenting the case which is able to capture the richness of the situation.*

(*ibid.*)

However, they point out, 'different types of case study are genuine options that can reflect the different aims of school based research, be they evaluation, inquiry, school development or how to manage change more effectively' (p 323). For the present research, Stake (1995) provides a useful delineation of three types of case study. The 'intrinsic case study' is studied in order to learn more about a particular instance – a student having difficulty, for example – while the 'instrumental case study' is used to gain insight and promote more general understanding – the effects on teachers of a new marking system, for example. An 'instrumental case study' may also choose several teachers to study rather than just one, or, in choosing to use schools as cases, choose several schools; each case study is instrumental (in the case of the above example) to learning about the effects of the marking system, but there will be important co-ordination between the individual studies. In this latter case, the work is called 'collective case study'. Such distinctions are important, maintains Stake, not for simple sorting purposes, but because the methods used will be different: the more the intrinsic interest in the case, the more we will restrain our curiosities and special interests and the more we will try to discern and pursue issues critical to the case (p 4).

Stake's 'instrumental case study' is thus encapsulating of the present research in its proposal to study the effects of a curriculum innovation as it occurs in three classrooms, and, within this context, to focus upon a particular group of learners. In this type of case study, it is the 'issue' that is dominant (whereas in intrinsic case study, the case itself is of highest importance) - 'we start and end with issues dominant' (p16). Stake's description of the nature of such 'issues' seems particularly apt in the context of the responses to the introduction of the Literacy Hour stated in the earlier part of this chapter:

Issues are not simple and clean, but intricately wired to political, social, historical, and especially personal contexts.... Issues draw us towards observing, even teasing out, the problems of the case.... Issues help us expand upon the moment, help us to see the instance in a more historical light... Issue questions or issue statements provide a powerful conceptual structure for organizing the study of a case.

(p 7)

Stake thus emphasises the centrality of the researcher's interpretation in qualitative case study research – and herein lie both the strengths and 'weaknesses' of case study research. Nisbet and Watt (1984) identified three main weaknesses: results which may not be generalisable except where other readers or researchers see their application; difficulty of cross-checking renders them potentially selective, biased, personal and subjective; and they are prone to problems of observer bias, despite attempts made to address reflexivity. Such concerns have generated strong debate during the past two decades: Atkinson and Delamont's (1985) critique of case study research in education, with regard particularly to ethnographic and action research, for example, charged this with too often reproducing the status quo, representing a denial of theory and method and, in rejecting generalisation, dooming studies to remain isolated one-off affairs with no sense of cumulative knowledge or developing theoretical insight.

Issues of reliability and validity may, in the simplest analysis, be conceived as: for reliability – the extent to which a research fact or finding can be repeated, given the same circumstances; and, for validity – the extent to which a research fact or finding is what it is claimed to be. The concept of reliability has been considered unworkable for qualitative research: 'the premises of naturalistic studies include the uniqueness and idiosyncrasy of situations, such that the study cannot be replicated – that is their strength rather than their weakness' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000:119). The all-encompassing role of the researcher who both collects and analyses the data means that it is the researcher's experience which predominates and thus the question of reliability raises issues of the influence of the researcher, research technique, setting etc.

Hitchcock and Hughes thus suggest that it is much more profitable to critically consider the significance of a range of a range of key personal variables of both researchers and subjects as well as considering the nature of the technique employed itself. Similarly, Bogdan and Biklen (1998) observe that educational researchers come from a variety of backgrounds (having, variously, interests in psychology, sociology, child development, anthropology etc) and that academic training will affect the questions a researcher brings to the enquiry, the data collected and the conclusions reached. Theoretical perspectives specific to their fields will also structure the study. Reliability in such studies thus tends

to be viewed as a fit between what researchers record as data and what actually occurs in the setting rather than the literal consistency across different observations

The concept of validity is multi-faceted, taking many different forms. In quantitative data, for example, validity might be improved through careful sampling, appropriate instrumentation and appropriate statistical treatments of the data – while for qualitative data, validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, *op cit*, p 105). In both orientations, however, validity should be seen as a matter of degree rather than as an absolute state (Gronlund, 1981) with the researcher striving to minimise invalidity and maximise validity. Validity then, needs to be faithful to its premises and the researcher will need to locate discussions of this within the research paradigm that is being used.

Two subdivisions of validity – 'internal' and 'external' – refer, on the one hand, to the demonstration that the explanation provided by a piece of research can actually be sustained by the data, and on the other hand, to the degree to which the results can be generalized to a wider population, cases or situations. LeCompte and Preissle (1993), addressing the issue of internal validity in relation to ethnographic research, suggest various strategies. These include the use of: multiple researchers, participant researchers, peer examination of data and mechanical means to record, store and retrieve data.
The issue of external validity in naturalistic research has been interpreted in terms of comparability and transferability between groups and settings (e.g.Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Le Compte and Preissle, 1993). Lincoln and Guba argue that this should be facilitated through researchers providing sufficiently rich data for readers and users of research to determine whether transferability is possible. Stake (1995), in relation particularly to case study research, introduces the terms *petites generalisations* for generalising statements made *within* a study – and which, through continuing observation, will be subject to refinement into 'modified generalisation'. His term *grandes generalisations* refers to general statements about issues of which the case is one example and which can be modified by the findings of a particular case study.

The above outline of issues for qualitative, naturalistic research, then, places the integrity of the researcher as central. It has also suggested that concepts of the uniqueness (or individuality) of the researcher's own 'history' must be considered as playing their part in determining the course such research will take. In the light of such considerations, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) proposal of the concept of 'trustworthiness' as an alternative to reliability and validity seems particularly appropriate – this, in Bassey's (1999) view, 'successfully illuminates the ethic of respect for truth in case study research' (p 75). Bassey's own version, which draws on, and adds to, Lincoln and Guba's concept, expresses this as a number of questions for the data collection, data analysis, interpretation and reporting stages of a research project – and includes ethical considerations of 'respect for persons' at each of these stages. Bassey's work has been drawn upon in the present study, and is included in sections describing particular methods used.

2.5 Chapter summary and conclusions

Chapter 2 has reviewed early responses to the introduction of the Literacy Hour and thereby provides a context for the exploratory stage of the present research, in which the Literacy Hour as practised in three Key Stage One classrooms is explored. As Bogdan and Biklen remark (above), those researching educational issues come from a variety of professional backgrounds and theoretical orientations, and will thus present differing perspectives – an observation illustrated by the stances taken by Bourne and Hilton. Likewise, in the informal and exploratory observations described and discussed in the following chapter, areas that present themselves as significant will be influenced by my own background and experiences as a class teacher and language support teacher in multiethnic school settings. Such considerations inform the qualitative approach taken to the present study as outlined in the section above, and reported in the following four chapters.

Chapter 3

Introduction to Phase One: exploratory study

3.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the exploratory stage of the study, outlining the research setting – the school, its organisation, pupils, teachers and the wider community, and discussing the data collection methods and ethical considerations for the research.

Approach to the study

The study commenced during the first year of national implementation of the Literacy Hour. Observing the new curriculum as it was taught in the Key Stage 1 department of a multiethnic primary school, the purpose at this stage was to observe the Literacy Hour in practice and its impact upon teachers and pupils and to identify emerging issues which might develop into themes for more detailed study. An overview of the first stage of the study has been given in Chapter 1 (section **1.5**). The fairly broad research question that was formulated following informal observations of Literacy Hours early in 1999 (during which the broad range of activities taking place was observed) was:

> What is the nature of the language and literacy experiences of pupils during the Literacy Hour in relation to reading development; are these facilitating of accepted 'good practice' for multiethnic classrooms? (RQ 1)

The more specific questions emerging as the research proceeded are incorporated within the following chapter.

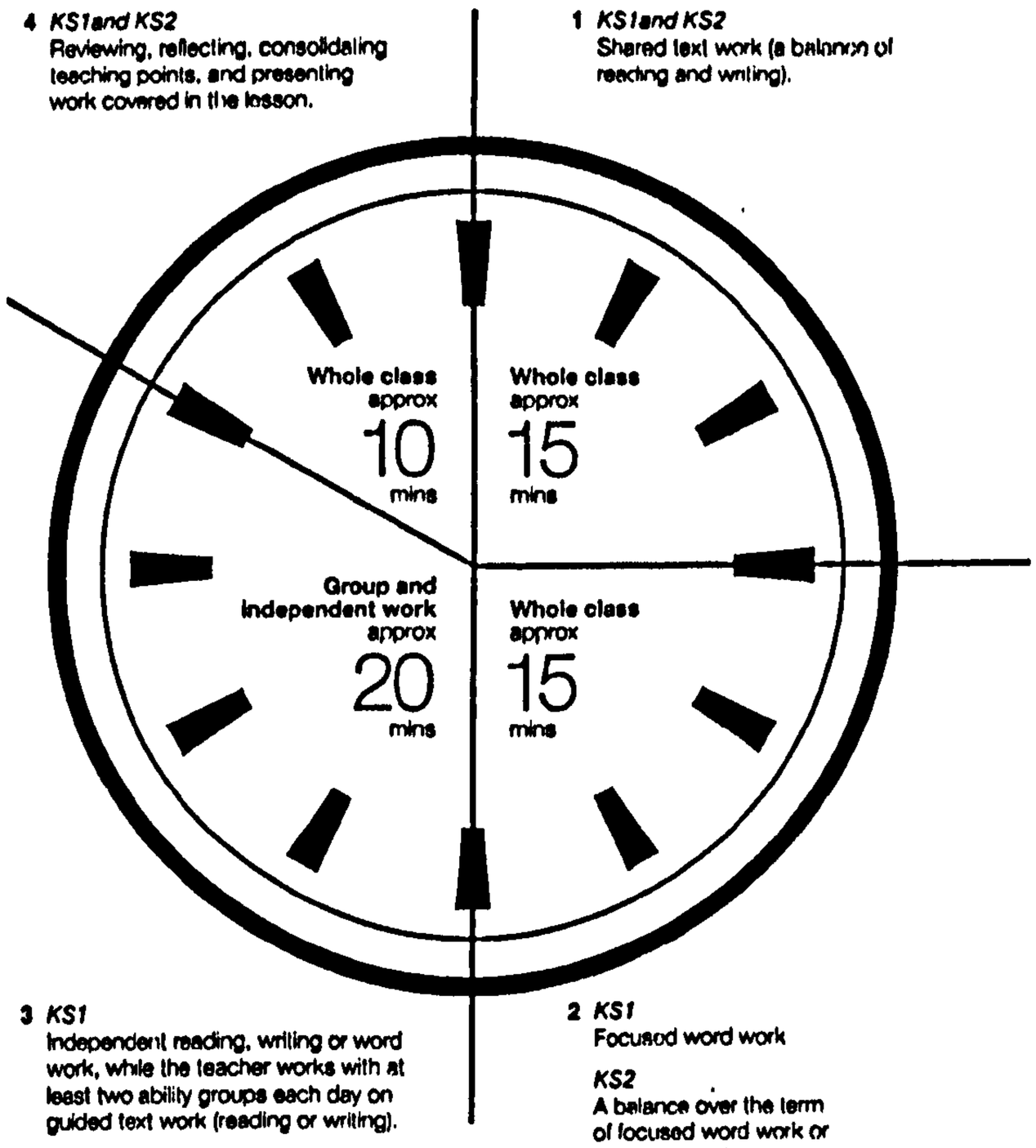
The research question is addressed in the form of a 'dialogue' between my reading of NLS documents and the observations of the Literacy Hour in practice. Two documents are included in the discussion: the *Framework for Teaching* (hereafter: '*Framework*'), and *Module 4* of the NLS – *Shared and Guided Reading and Writing at Pre-Key Stage 1*

and Key Stage 1 (hereafter: 'Module 4'). The former document details what is to be taught, and how, during each term of Key Stages 1 and 2 from the Reception Year to Year 6, while Module 4 gives more explicitly practical ideas and advice to teachers on implementation. The documents are broadly considered within a 'social constructivist' view of learning, which proponents of the NLS have argued features within the Literacy Hour provision (Corden: 1999). This view of learning is expanded more fully in the main literature review (section **6.2.1**).

Focus of the exploratory stage of the study

The Literacy Hour 'clock' is reproduced below, showing how the hour is structured for each class from Reception to Year 6 (4 – 11 year olds).

***Figure 3.1** Structure of the Literacy Hour* (*Framework*, p 9)



Two key areas are discussed in the exploratory study: didactic talk between teachers and pupils (talk between pupils themselves is also touched upon), and reading development. Within the section on reading, the study focuses on: 'Shared Reading' – occurring in the first 15 minutes of the Literacy Hour, 'Word Level Work' – the second 15 minutes, and 'Guided Reading' – the following 20 minute segment. Consideration of each activity begins with an outline of the directives from the NLS documents, and then the findings from the classroom observations are discussed with reference to these. (The 'Plenary' session – the final 10 minutes of the Literacy Hour – is not included in the discussion. In observed sessions it often did not take place, or else tended to comprise a hasty listing of activities undertaken during the previous group work sessions.) Chapter 5 concludes this stage of the study with a consideration of Research Question 1. Themes for further investigation arising from Phase One of the study are then outlined.

3.2 The setting

School population. The study took place in an inner-city primary school in south west England with a multiethnic school population. This school was selected as having a fairly stable population of EAL learners, of between a quarter and a third of pupils in each class – and thus EAL learners could be studied as part of the 'normal' and established classroom setting within which they were already integrated. The school was situated close to a long established African Caribbean community and, in addition to those pupils speaking English as an additional language, was attended by pupils of African Caribbean and dual heritage descent as well as white pupils. The main languages spoken by EAL learners in the school were Cantonese, Punjabi/Urdu and Somali – and these (along with Spanish and Farsi – spoken by two children) made up the range of languages of children in the classes in which the study took place. At the time of the study, the school population was fairly settled, with few transient pupils or 'new arrivals' from abroad.

The diversity of its population was reflected in communal areas of the school by the depiction of welcoming notices, information for parents, labels for directions etc in the variety of languages spoken by the children in the school. Within some classrooms too there were multilingual captions to displays. Book corners included books sensitive to

the cultural backgrounds of the children and some dual-language texts, and in the Key Stage 1 department, the EAL learners had the opportunity to borrow dual-language books with accompanying recorded tape in their first language/English to share with their family at home. In Assemblies the school celebrated the children's various festivals. There was thus an overt recognition of the diverse backgrounds making up the school population.

School organisation and Key Stage 1 teachers. The school, which included a nursery class, had a one-form entry and the research was situated in the three classes of the Key Stage 1 department of the school: Reception, Year One and Year Two. Both the Reception and Year One teachers had (at the start of the study) entered the teaching profession within the previous two years, as mature entrants, and both had taught in other schools prior to taking up their present posts. The Year Two teacher had taught at the school for many years and held the post of English Co-ordinator; she was thus charged with disseminating the National Literacy Strategy to other members of staff. Teachers were supported in the classroom by 'G.A.s' (General Assistants) – who had no formal teaching qualification – but worked under the direction of the class teacher. During days on which the observations took place, only the Reception teacher had classroom assistance for part of the Literacy Hour. The school also qualified for additional funding to support EAL and black pupils, and two bilingual teachers, Cantonese/Mandarin and Urdu/Punjabi speaking, were employed in the school – each for one day a week. (However, these teachers were not in the classes during any of the observations.)

EAL learners. All three classes had pupil numbers in the low to mid 20s and the proportion of EAL learners in each class was approximately 1/4 in the Year Two and Reception classes and just under 1/3 in the Year One class. These figures fluctuated, however, and during the following two years, a number of families moved to the area and EAL numbers rose in all three classes (two years later, just under half the Reception class were made up of EAL learners, for example). Appendix 2 gives information on groupings within the classes over the two years of the study.

There were few children in the school born outside the UK, and although parents might not speak English with them, they had older siblings and relations who had previously learnt English at school and/or they had attended the school nursery. On reaching statutory school age, therefore, most were familiar with communicating in English. The school used a 5-point scale of English language descriptors to assist in assessing EAL learners and all the children in the study had been placed at Level 2 'emergent' or 3 'consolidating':

Table 3.2 EAL Language Levels[1]

Level 2 **(emergent)**	**Oracy: includes pupils who:** • understand words and phrases frequently used by teachers in the classroom • in spoken English use basic structures with some errors • are beginning to join in conversations and make contributions in class/playground • communicate meaning using basic vocabulary	**Literacy: includes pupils who:** • may rely on visual clues for comprehension • are beginning to read simple text with comprehension • are beginning to work out meanings of unknown words from context cues • are beginning to write simple sentences • are using phonetically plausible spellings
Level 3 **(consolidating)**	**Oracy: includes pupils who:** • follow the broad outline of most teacher communication • are able to converse and socialise with peer groups • join in and contribute to group discussion when supported and encouraged • understand spoken passages containing more than one key piece of information • understand concepts taught without total understanding of language	**Literacy: includes pupils who:** • summarise the broad outline of a story or other pieces of factual information but still with errors and omissions • are beginning to acquire and use specialist vocabulary and structures appropriate to National Curriculum subjects • read fairly confidently but decoding skills often outstrip comprehension • can undertake extended writing but still with errors and omissions

There were just two pupils at Key Stage 1 – in Years One and Two respectively – who had been new to the UK (and English) the previous year. Both were confident children, whose developing English was supported at home by adults who spoke English, and they were reported to be making 'very good' progress in acquiring English, according to their teachers. They were also placed within the Level 2 category.

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[1] These are based on the work of Hilary Hester and colleagues at the (then) Inner London Education Authority's Centre for Language in Primary Education (CLPE), 1988.

EAL learners and the Literacy Hour. The three teachers included all EAL learners as part of the whole class group during the Literacy Hour, and these children did not receive separate teaching or activities at this time. During the 20 minute Group and Independent Work slot of the Literacy Hour, they were placed within the prescribed ability groups, all of which included English only speaking pupils. Appendix 2 shows the distribution of EAL learners amongst the classes.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

In keeping with the exploratory nature of the early stages of the study, information was collected from a variety of sources with the aim of building up a picture of the Literacy Hour in action from those concerned indirectly, as well as directly, with its implementation. **Table 1.1** on page 11 (Chapter One) shows the sum of the data collected during this phase.

Observations

Approach. The approach to the observations, as described above, was initially unstructured, becoming more focused as themes of particular interest emerged. Observation notes in the form of descriptive running records of Literacy Hours (activities, teacher-pupil/pupil-pupil interactions, books and materials etc) were made, with my own reflections on practices observed noted down in the margin of the pages (Appendix 3 shows an example). In this way, emerging points for consideration were noted as they occurred, and highlighted as possible themes for take-up as the study progressed. Towards the end of this phase, audio-recordings to capture verbal interactions were trialled, these made with a small portable recorder to which an external 'boundary' microphone was attached. This enabled me to move easily about the classroom when activities changed, and the microphone – effective at capturing talk from a distance – could be unobtrusively positioned. This worked well, especially during the whole class sessions; however, the sensitivity of the microphone resulted in a lot of extraneous classroom noise being recorded during the more busy and noisy group work segments of the Literacy Hour and this occasionally obscured the verbal interactions. Once or twice the microphone itself became disconnected, with consequent loss of recording.

Focus. In situating EAL learners within the whole class context they were, as previously stated, a particular though not exclusive focus for observation. During the first two segments of the Literacy Hour and during the Plenary (on the occasions when this occurred) they were observed as part of the whole class; then, during the group activities, a single group of children containing EAL learners was observed. In this way, over the period of the exploratory study, a spread of activities, both teacher supported and unsupported, was observed.

Researcher role. Having worked in the three classes as a 'Section 11' language support teacher for several years directly prior to the research project, but now there as a researcher, my role during these observations might best be described as being between the 'participant-as-observer' and 'observer-as-participant' roles identified by Le Compte and Preissle (1993: 93-4). In the former, the observer is part of the social life of participants (my previous role) who documents and records what is happening for research purposes. In the latter, the observer is known as a researcher to the group (my present role) and has, perhaps, less extensive contact with them.

As far as my own 'stance' during the observations was concerned, in order to gain as thorough an overview of what was going on as possible, I aimed to remain an observer and not to actively participate. Thus, during the whole-class sessions, I sat to the side of the class so that I could see both teacher and children, but my presence was not highlighted. In the group sessions I sat close to the children's table, but busied myself with 'my writing' just as they were with their own assigned tasks. If specifically addressed by the children, I responded (but encouraged them to work independently of me) and likewise, the teachers occasionally drew me into their sessions. I saw an advantage of my former relationship with these teachers and pupils as being one of a possible lessening of the 'observer effect' whereby the presence of the observer affects and changes the behaviour of participants (see footnote, section **10.2**). A possible drawback, however, would be that the 'familiar' could not so easily become 'strange', and features of potential significance occurring might thus be missed.

Interviews

School and LEA staff. The purpose of these was to contribute to the overview of the new curriculum in action. Staff were asked to reflect upon various aspects of the Literacy Hour: an overview of it in practice – positive/negative aspects; how satisfactorily it catered for the different areas of the NC for English; effects on EAL learners; whether ability grouping was an issue; how their teaching roles had changed; resources available to support their teaching – books etc. The (unrecorded) interviews were semi-structured with an agenda of topics to be covered, and I took written notes during the interviews. Addressing issues of validity in discussing these subjective issues, a written account of the interview was forwarded to those interviewed for approval as representative of views they had expressed (see Appendix 4 for examples). One interviewee (the LEA Literacy Consultant), was not happy with the account, feeling it was unrepresentative of what she had said during the interview; the account was then rewritten incorporating her revisions and resubmitted for approval.

Parents. The purpose here was to gain information about the language and literacy practices and schooling issues of the EAL learners at Key Stage 1 and to ascertain parents' understanding and awareness of the Literacy Hour. Eleven interviews were carried out, and these covered all but one of the families of EAL learners in the three Key Stage 1 classes in the school. The interviews were structured, comprising mainly factual questions to parents regarding both their own and their children's language and literacy experiences in the home, wider community and at school. Information was collected on languages spoken and written, reading practices, supplementary/religious schools attended, parents' own links with the school and their awareness of curriculum issues. The intended 'outcomes' of these interviews were twofold – to both inform my own research project and to provide the school with more detailed information about the children and their parents and home background. Thus I aimed to reciprocate the assistance given to me by the school in my research study. (One outcome was the setting up of a register of languages in which parents were literate, and the offer to provide translations of school newsletters etc for those requesting this.) Two bilingual teachers – Chinese and Urdu/Punjabi speakers – working at the school assisted with interpreting during these interviews. A questionnaire format was used, the questions set out on paper

with a space for answers. As the parents (or translator) reported the responses to my questions, I completed the forms. A section of the form enquiring about reading practices is reproduced below:

Figure 3.2 *Extract from Parent Interview form*

Reading at home	***Home-school reading***
- Does child read at home?.....	- Does child bring book home?.....
- What does child read (own books comics/school /library books/etc).....	- Who reads with child?.....
- What language(s) does child read in?.....	- How often and for how long?.....
- How often/long does child read?.....	- Do parents write in child's Reading Diary?.....
- Who reads with child (Mum, Dad, grandparents, siblings, other), what do they read and in what language?.....	- Do parents find dual-language books and tapes useful?.....
	- Who uses these (child only; child/parent; child/sibling etc.....

The interviews provided useful contextual information on EAL learners for the study. All parents indicated that children read books brought home from school - all reading at least three or four times a week, while three families had a regular daily session. There was a variety of practice reported, with older siblings and fathers (more likely than mothers to read English) playing a key role. Four of the mothers were literate in English, and they reported regular reading sessions with their children and the school books. Speaking broadly, then – for these particular EAL learners there would be some continuity of home and school literacy practices. Thus a school literacy curriculum such as the NLS, organised predominantly around interaction with books, should facilitate *some* familiar patterns of engagement for these children – albeit within the context of large class groups.

Data interpretation

The exploratory study that appears in the following chapters is, as mentioned above, based primarily upon a reading of key NLS documents alongside the observations of Literacy Hour practice in three classrooms. The observations made of these Literacy Hours, captured through observation notes, were necessarily selective and fragmentary in nature, taken to be indicative rather than fully representative of the class discourse. The intention at this stage of the project was to identify themes which might become the subject of more systematic investigation in later stages of the project. In effect, three variables may be regarded as being at play here, each with their own interpretation of

'literacy'. First, there is the concept of literacy enshrined in the NLS directives; then the individual teacher's interpretation of this in her own classroom practice; finally, there are my own ideas about school literacy, which will affect the way I approach the observations, the aspects I focus upon and the interpretations that I make of what I observe.

The interview data has been diffused throughout the study. In the early stages teachers' comments, in conjunction with my own classroom observations, helped illuminate certain areas for focus. As the study progressed, they were also used to illustrate points made.

3.4 Ethical considerations

Considering this in terms of 'respect for persons' – that researchers, in taking data from persons, should do so in ways which recognise those persons' initial ownership of the data and which respect them as fellow human beings who are entitled to dignity and privacy (Bassey, 1999:74) – steps were taken regarding permission/agreement for the research being carried out; anonymity of subjects and transparency of the 'case records'. Initial permission to conduct the research was sought from, and granted by, the Head Teacher, and the three Key Stage 1 teachers were asked, and agreed, to take part in the study. During their interviews, I explained the research to the parents of the EAL learners, and asked permission for their children to take part – all agreed to this.

I discussed my observations informally with the teachers as the research was carried out, and when recordings were undertaken, I made the tapes available to them, should they wish to listen to these afterwards and to discuss any aspect of the recording. I offered not to use any part of these should the teachers request this, and also stopped the recording itself if asked – for instance, if the teacher needed to attend to a pupil who was being disruptive and did not wish this to be recorded. The accounts of the interviews with teachers and LEA staff were forwarded to each for approval and cleared by them.

Endnote This chapter has introduced the exploratory phase of the study; the following chapter considers the didactic and informal talk observed in the Literacy Hour and how teachers approached the development of reading.

Chapter 4

Exploratory Study

4.1 Introduction

This chapter, reporting the exploratory stage of the study, has five main sections:

4.2 Literacy Hour Talk. This section considers didactic talk between teachers and pupils and also informal talk arising between pupils and their peers.

4.3 Reading: the NLS *Framework* and *Module 4*. Here, the directives for developing reading are considered.

4.4 Shared Reading. Observations of the first segment of the Literacy Hour are discussed.

4.5 Word Level Work. Observations of the second segment of the Literacy Hour are discussed.

4.6 Guided Reading. Observations of this activity, taking place in the third segment of the Literacy Hour, are discussed.

4.2 Literacy Hour Talk

This section considers teacher-pupil talk of a didactic nature, and also talk between pupils and their peers during unsupervised segments of the Literacy Hour. The National Curriculum (for English) category of 'Speaking and Listening' is not separately identified in the *Framework*, although it is referred to as being 'an essential part' of literacy and as 'contribut[ing] substantially to the development of Speaking and Listening' (p 3).

4.2.1 The NLS *Framework*

Emphasis in the document is primarily upon the nature of the interaction between teacher and pupil, since the Literacy Hour is 'designed to maximize the time teachers spend directly teaching their class...[by shifting] the balance of teaching from individualized work...towards more whole-class and group teaching'(p 10). The document lists the

characteristics of successful teaching in this respect. The Literacy Hour is intended to promote 'literacy instruction'. This, however, is not seen as 'a recipe for returning to some crude or simple form of "transmission" teaching' (p 8); rather, it 'should aim for high levels of motivation and active engagement for pupils.' The most successful teaching, states the NLS document, includes teaching which is 'interactive – pupils' contributions are encouraged, expected, and extended.' Teachers will need to use a variety of teaching strategies, including 'modelling', 'scaffolding', 'questioning: to probe pupils' understanding, to cause them to reflect on and refine their work, and to extend their ideas', 'initiating and guiding exploration', 'investigating ideas', 'discussing and arguing' and 'listening to and responding'.

The language of the *Framework*, then, might be seen in orientation as containing elements of a social constructivist view of teaching and learning, realised through the verbal interactions between teacher and pupils. However, little elaboration on how teachers might implement these 'strategies' (which themselves are listed as a series of bullet points, detached from any explicit reference to research into children's development and teaching practices to support it) is given. *Module 4* of the NLS provides more detailed, practical, advice on implementation – the Appendix lists 'Teaching prompts' (examples of what teachers might do and say in each section of the Shared and Guided reading and writing sessions) to engage and motivate children. These create a picture of sessions which are interactive and challenging for pupils, albeit with the 'criteria of relevance' generally retained by the teacher. There are some exceptions, however – during Shared Reading, 'get the children to suggest possible outcomes and events'; 'encourage the children to use their background knowledge to make predictions....'; 'ask individuals to predict an ending to the story....' (p 38). And in Guided Reading follow-up: 'share responses to the story....'; 'discuss what makes the story funny'; 'discuss ideas beyond the story or 'between the lines', such as *why* things happened as they did'; 'say what they liked about the story and why' (p 44).

The exploratory study, then, aimed to observe the ways in which teachers were interacting verbally with pupils to develop literacy:

> What form do teachers' interactions take – are pupils' contributions being 'encouraged, expected and extended' and is their understanding being probed 'to cause them to reflect on and refine their work, and to extend their ideas'?
>
> (RQ 1a)

4.2.2 The Exploratory Study: teacher and pupil talk

Teacher Initiated Talk

In the three classes, teaching in each of the four sections of the Literacy Hour was conducted through the format of teachers engaging in verbal interactions with pupils. Field notes taken during observations of Literacy Hours indicated that interactions appeared to be mainly of an 'IRF' structure[1]. Teachers would ask a question which required pupils to respond, usually by recalling a piece of information, and the teacher would then give feedback in the form of a judgement on the answer – 'Yes, good girl', for example. This sequence tended only to be extended into a longer exchange if there was a need to elicit the correct answer following an initial unsatisfactory one having been given. There was thus scant evidence of the use of the teaching strategies recommended by the *Framework*.

Examples of teacher-pupil talk from a Year Two Literacy Hour provide an illustration of the type of exchanges observed. The class is studying a poem called 'Chinese Rain Dragon' in an enlarged book (*Big Book of Poetry*) and the children have been asked what the terms 'author' and 'title' mean. The teacher then asks an EAL learner [2]the meaning of 'contents':

Teacher: What do we mean by 'contents', Sana?
Pupil: What page… *[hesitating]*
Teacher: Yes, good girl – what *page* the poems are on.

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[1] The 'IRF' structure, identified by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) is made up of an *initiation* by a teacher, eliciting a *response* from a pupil, followed by *feedback* (often in the form of an evaluation) from the teacher. It is discussed further in Chapter 8.

[2] EAL learners' contributions are identified in bold type.

The exchange ended here; and although Sana has indicated an awareness of the meaning of the word, she is not assisted further to articulate it more precisely. The teacher herself provides a possible definition before moving briskly on to check the children's understanding of the term 'verse'. After a shared reading of the poem, the teacher checks pupils' comprehension:

Teacher: Oh when will *what* come? *[referring to a line of the poem]*
What are they waiting for?
Pupil: Rain.
Teacher: Why do they need rain?
Pupil: To grow.
Teacher: Yes.

Again, the brief answer is accepted as sufficient evidence of understanding and no further clarification or discussion of the topic is entered into. Of those Literacy Hours observed, interactions in all three classes tended to follow such a pattern, with teacher questioning being used to check pupils' knowledge rather than to probe their understanding in ways which might extend their learning.

Pupil Initiated Talk.

While the observations above referred to talk that was initiated by the teacher, important in a social constructivist view of classroom talk would be that which is initiated by pupils themselves. The extent to which pupils' volunteered comments and observations occurred varied between the 3 classes. In the Year Two class there were very few, while pupils in the Reception and Year One classes quite frequently volunteered their ideas, especially during the Shared Text Work section of the Literacy Hour when the illustrated 'big book' offered a stimulus to talk. These initiations were often acknowledged and accepted as contributing to the discourse - and sometimes they were taken up by teachers, as illustrated by the following short exchange between an EAL learner and her teacher as the Reception class read the story of *The Three Little Pigs:*

Pupil: I got a brown house!
Teacher: What's your house made of, Liala?
Pupil: Bricks.

The exchange ended here as the teacher returned to the book. Liala might be seen as having registered her engagement with the topic of the lesson and the teacher's question has orientated her more explicitly towards the theme of the story as well as assisting her towards a more refined description of her house. However, there is a truncated air to the exchange and it is perhaps constraints of time that prevent a more extended exploration of the topic, in which Liala might be assisted to articulate her understandings more fully.

Gibbons (2000) has spoken of the 'linguistic bridges' that teachers need to build for EAL learners to span the difference between their current level of knowledge and second language abilities on the one hand and the broader knowledge into which they are being apprenticed, and the appropriate language by which this is expressed on the other. One strategy teachers might employ following a pupil initiation is the use of short but effective questions to focus the pupil's attention on a specific language feature, after which responsibility is handed back to the learner to have 'another go' herself. The interaction above might be seen as an example of a partial, but uncompleted realisation of this process.

The example above was, however, a rare instance of EAL learners observed making initiating moves with their teachers. More often they remained silent during teacher-led activities unless specifically asked to speak.

Peer Group Talk.

In addition to the didactic talk between teachers and pupils, some lively conversations between pupils and their peers were observed occurring during the Group and Independent Work section of the Literacy Hour, when pupils were working independently of the teacher. Consideration of these is included here because it appeared that this talk might be regarded as playing a role in contributing to pupils' development – in effect, constituting an alternative (or additional) site for learning to that of the more formal teacher-pupil interactions. In all three classes observed, talk was sanctioned so long as it did not become too loud or detract from the set tasks with which the children were engaged. Collaborative talk *per se*, however, did not form part of teachers' planning (as depicted on the weekly planning sheets for the Literacy Hour). Several observations concerning the talk were made:

- It was frequently linked to the task with which the pupils were engaged.

- There was often a personal/social element – sometimes disputational – to the interactions.

- EAL learners were observed to be actively participating in these conversations. This provided a contrast to the whole-class and teacher-led group sessions, when they rarely volunteered their thoughts and ideas and their responses to teachers' questions were generally composed of a single word.

The following example was captured while trialling the recording of Literacy Hours. From the 'Independent work' section of the Literacy Hour, children in the Reception Class are engaged in identifying and colouring in the pictures on a worksheet that begin with 'sh' sound, distinguishing them from pictures beginning with 'ch' sound. (EAL learners are highlighted in bold.)

Lee:	What's some'un with a 'sh'?
Halina:	**Shelf, shed, shower. Shelf.**
Lee:	Shelf? Where's shelf?
[?]	Nowhere!
Lee:	Do you have to colour the house in?
Halina:	**No, that's not a house – it's a shed – *shed!***
Lee:	Sh, shed, sh, sh, sh. Do you have to colour the shed in?
Lenny:	Yes, cos this is a shell *[referring to the picture he is colouring]* and it begins with 'sh'.

In this short exchange, Halina, who in whole class sessions was observed to be very quiet, takes on an authoritative role in assisting Lee with his worksheet. In considering the learning that takes place, it might be suggested that both Halina – and Lenny in the last line – have helped Lee towards an understanding of the sound 'sh' (which he has failed to access from the previous whole-class phonics session). Evidence of this comes in his utterance 'Sh, shed, sh, sh, sh….', in which he practices the sound for himself and links it to the word 'shed'.

As well as talk connected to the execution of the immediate task in hand, children were also observed to be engaged in more discursive conversations which, though sparked off by the activity and loosely connected to it, explored topics in terms of personal

experiences, likes, dislikes etc. (In the example given above, the task could be viewed as essentially undemanding – concerned with checking pupils' knowledge of the 'sh' sound – and with little scope for personal expression, apart from choosing a colour with which to fill in the line drawings on the sheet. The talk accompanying such activities was often connected with getting the task done.) At times when children were involved in activities of a more imaginative nature – producing a piece of writing and an accompanying illustration, for example – the pictures the children drew often formed the jumping off point for the more discursive conversations which took place. In sessions observed, however, it appeared to be the *visual* nature of the activity with which these young children were engaged that served as a prompt for their talk.

4.2.3 Discussion

This section, on 'Speaking and Listening' (interpreted in terms of the verbal interactions that occurred) in the Literacy Hour, has suggested that teaching during the Literacy Hours observed was 'interactive' in the sense that teachers were involving pupils verbally in what might be termed the 'learning discourse'. However, the observations suggest that recommended strategies such as those of 'scaffolding' and questioning to probe pupils' understanding to cause them to reflect...and to extend their ideas, does not feature prominently in teacher-pupil discourse. Teachers' interactions with pupils – frequently encapsulated within the brief IRF exchange – tended, rather, to be concerned with checking their knowledge through the use of 'recall questions'. To the observer, there was a sense of pupils being slotted into a pre-programmed agenda, rather than pupils themselves being given a stake in helping to create that agenda – as might be expected to result from an implementation of the recommended teaching strategies of 'initiating and guiding exploration', 'investigating ideas', 'discussing and arguing' and 'listening to and responding'.

However, it might be suggested that a pre-programmed agenda, giving little leeway for departure, is perhaps no more or less than an adherence to the directives of the *Framework* could be expected to produce in practice. The reasons for this are twofold, relating to both the structure of the Literacy Hour itself in terms of short, timed activities and to the detailed instructions concerning the content of what is to be taught. There is, perhaps, a tension, or sense of mismatch, between a social constructivist orientation

towards teaching and learning which the 'teaching strategies' recommended by the *Framework*'s 'Rationale' seem to imply – and that which would accommodate the teaching of the type of curriculum detailed in the lists of what is to be taught in each term of each year group. These relate to specific 'High frequency words', 'Phonics, spelling and vocabulary', 'Grammar and punctuation' and 'Comprehension and composition', and teachers are required to complete medium term and weekly planning sheets detailing when, what and to whom they will be teaching.

Further, the wording of the *Framework* itself does little to clarify the matter. Describing 'the most successful teaching' (p8), the following two bullet points are juxtaposed:

- interactive – pupils' contributions are encouraged, expected and extended;
- well-paced – there is a sense of urgency, driven by the need to make progress and succeed;

The compatibility of these with each other, and the feasibility of gearing one's teaching to both, might be questioned, particularly within teaching slots spanning barely 15 minutes. Is an encouraging atmosphere, in which pupils' contributions might emerge and be extended, likely to be one 'driven' by a sense of urgency and the need to succeed? The former would suggest a more open-ended, less time-constrained experience, while the latter evokes one in which the agenda is pre-determined and pupils slot in. Literacy Hours observed during the present study conformed more to the latter model and this raises questions regarding EAL learners' need for 'thinking time' in which to frame their responses. A recurring feature in the observation notes of all three year groups showed that the attention of EAL learners (in particular) appeared to wander at times during the whole-class sessions. This was signalled by looking around the classroom, at other children, fiddling with shoelaces etc or merely staring blankly ahead. Attention would be recruited again by a change of activity or speaker, writing on the whiteboard, turning the page of the book, linking talk to a tangible visual such as the illustration in the book etc.

Observations of the Independent Work sections of Literacy Hours, however, found pupils – particularly EAL learners – more actively engaged than during the whole class sessions. This was revealed in the informal talk between peers that arose at this time. The content and structure of this talk was often observed to be linked to the kind of task that the

children were engaged with – and it is suggested that these interactions might provide an additional support for development including, but also extending beyond, the particular learning objectives of a given Literacy Hour.

With such specific requirements – along with the pressure to fit their planning and teaching into the short slots which structure the Literacy Hour, it is perhaps unrealistic to expect teachers to extend their interactions with pupils much beyond the familiar pattern of checking pupils' understanding (of the predetermined plan as it is taught) through the use of 'recall' questions. One class teacher characterised the dilemma in terms of the 'strait-jacket' of the NLS, which gave her a feeling of being 'strapped to the Framework' with little room for manoeuvre.

Summary and discussion

In this section the characteristics of talk observed between teachers and pupils and pupils and their peers during the Literacy Hour has been discussed (RQ 1a). I have suggested that with regard to teacher-pupil interactions, the *Framework* – in the particular detail of its structure and content – does not readily facilitate the kinds of teaching practice towards which it aspires. By accepting and responding in a limited way to pupil responses and initiations, teachers in this study show their awareness of the importance of linking their teaching to pupil thinking, but constraints of time and the need to manage learning simultaneously for the whole class may prevent effective extension or 'take-up' of pupils' contributions. This has a particular impact upon EAL learners, who are coping with language as well as literacy learning. Most interviewees also drew attention to this issue when asked about speaking and listening, eg:

> *There's very little opportunity for this. Teachers are taking no records at all – not even snatches of dialogue.* ('Section 11' teacher)

> *A lot of teacher talk and not enough time for discussion of text. Literacy is reduced to mere grammar elements, understanding structure of a sentence – language as a system.* (Section 11 Team Leader)

> *The richer and more worthwhile opportunities for talk occur outside the Literacy Hour....* (Class teacher)

There was a more positive view from the Literacy Consultant, who, speaking more generally, commented that 'the whole-class section of the Literacy Hour is very 'oral' –

good for developing language in a non-threatening environment, allowing children to extend their vocabulary'.

4.3 Reading: the NLS *Framework* and *Module 4*

This section outlines and discusses the approach to the teaching of reading adopted by the NLS and the questions that arose from this for the exploratory stage of the study. The detail of the document's directives regarding the content/methods to be used are discussed and the approach is also considered in terms of the needs of EAL learners.

Learning to read successfully is represented by the *Framework* (p3-5) in terms of the acquisition of a range of strategies 'to get at the meaning of a text'. These strategies are depicted as 'a series of searchlights, each of which sheds light on the text', and, continues the document, successful readers use as many of these strategies as possible. The strategies are: phonic (sounds and spelling), knowledge of content, grammatical knowledge and word recognition and graphic knowledge. Although in its diagrammatical depiction of these four 'searchlights', the *Framework* shows them as operating equally on text (i.e. one is not elevated over another), the document then goes on to stress the importance of focusing on phonics at the Key Stage 1 level. 'While all the searchlights are important, the balance between them should vary at different stages of learning to read'. 'At Key Stage 1, there should be a strong and systematic emphasis on the teaching of phonics and other word level skills.' 'Most teachers', it is asserted, 'have often been over-cautious about the teaching of phonics' and 'it is essential that pupils are taught these basic decoding and spelling skills from the outset.' The rationale for this emphasis is that pupils otherwise become 'over-reliant on their knowledge of context and grammar. They pay too little attention to how words sound and how they are spelt.' Without the ability to decode, they will have problems getting at the meaning of more complex, less familiar texts and dealing with the more extended texts and information books used across the curriculum at Key Stage 2.

The NLS, then, foregrounds decoding skills over contextual and grammatical understanding for the youngest learners at Key Stage 1. An examination of the directives for 4-5 year olds, for example, reveals that 45 listed 'high frequency' words are to be

taught as sight recognition words and 'achieved' by the end of the Reception year. Only four of these are nouns - words to which meaning might more readily be attached, particularly important for EAL learners. In addition, pupils in this year are to be taught:

> *To recognise all initial consonant and short vowel sounds (a-z, ch, sh, th) in speech and in writing; to identify and write correct initial letters in response to the letter sound, word, object or picture.*
>
> *To recognise and name each letter of the alphabet and to be aware of alphabetical order through rhymes, songs.*
>
> *Discriminate, write and read final sounds in simple words.* (p 64)

This represents an extensive requirement for children in their first year of school, some of whom will have only recently (at the start of the school year) reached the age of 4 years. The listing of these objectives as discrete skills, together with the requirement that they are to be mastered within a year implies teaching practices which focus on the mastery of these skills as isolated, rather than contextually bound, language items, it might be suggested.[3]

Such an emphasis is difficult to reconcile with a constructivist view of learning, which would suggest that effective learning does not proceed through the addition of discrete facts to an existing store of knowledge but through relating new experiences and ways of understanding to existing understanding of the matter in hand. Frank Smith, in *Reading* (1985) refers to this as 'the theory of the world in the head':

> *The foundation of both learning and comprehension is the theory of the world which every individual has constructed and carries around in the head all the time. This theory is constantly tested and modified in all interactions with the world. It is the source of the predictions which enable us to make sense of events and of language and the source of the hypotheses which when tested result in learning. If we cannot make sense of the world – if the situation confronting us cannot be related to our theory of the world – then there can be no comprehension and no learning.*
>
> (pp 97-8)

However, the NLS does provide an explicit context in which the 'word level' skills are to be taught: that of the enlarged text or 'big book', and an aim of the present exploratory

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[3] In her interview (Appendix 4), the Reception class teacher expressed some concern with regard to such issues, citing an EAL learner in her class who though appearing to participate fully and confidently in Literacy Hour activities, was unable to link the sounds she had learnt to meaningful concepts and ideas.

study was to observe the particular ways in which teachers were using these texts to assist pupils in developing the reading 'skills' with which the NLS is especially concerned.

Questions remain, nevertheless, regarding the separation of these more mechanical skills from wider issues and purposes in reading. The development of a personal response towards what is read, for example – in addition to providing a context for acquisition of more mechanical reading skills – may also be viewed as important in terms of developing a positive attitude towards books and reading. This is essential to foster, some would argue, in the early stages of school, when attitudes towards self and learning are developing. The *Framework*, however, appears to view discussion of text departing from the more overtly mechanical elements as being overridingly for purposes of checking comprehension:

> *At Key Stage 1, teachers should use shared reading to read with the class, focusing on comprehension and on specific features e.g. word-building and spelling patterns, punctuation, the lay-out and purpose, the structure and organisation of the sentences. Shared reading provides a context for applying and teaching word-level skills and for teaching how to use other reading cues to check for meaning, and identify and self-correct errors. Shared reading, with shared writing, also provide the context for developing pupils' grammatical awareness, and their understanding of sentence construction and punctuation.*
> (p 11)

And *Module 4* of the NLS echoes this in its definition of the child's role during Shared Reading at Key Stage 1 as being 'to participate in the reading, individually and as a class, in order to learn and practise word and sentence level skills in the context of lively and interesting texts' (p 9).

On the other hand, a somewhat broader view of the process of learning to read appears in the detail of the Termly Objectives regarding 'text level work'. These include activities depicting children in roles which are active and responsive to texts; for example:

(Reception Year) - *to use knowledge of familiar texts to re-enact or re-tell to others, recounting the main points in correct sequence;*

(Year One) - *to describe story settings and incidents and relate them to own experience and that of others;*

- *to re-enact stories in a variety of ways, e.g. through role-play, using dolls or puppets;*

- *to discuss reasons for, or causes of, incidents in stories;*

- *to compare and contrast preferences and common themes in stories and poems;*

(Year Two)

- *to discuss familiar story themes and link to own experiences, e.g. illness, getting lost, going away;*

- *to predict story endings/incidents, e.g. from unfinished extracts while reading with the teacher;*

- *to identify and describe characters, expressing own views and using words and phrases from texts;*

- *to compare books by same author: settings, characters, themes; to evaluate and form preferences, giving reasons;*

- *to read, respond imaginatively, recommend and collect examples of humorous stories, extracts, poems;*

(*Framework*, pp 18-30)

There are, then, somewhat differing emphases and 'messages' given to teachers by the various sections of the NLS documents regarding the way in which the segments of the Literacy Hour should be approached. The exploratory study sought to explore the ways in which teachers worked within these NLS guidelines. Were they interpreting the directives in ways in which the texts would be addressed as having an intrinsic value in their own right – towards which teachers would assist pupils in constructing their own understandings – or would they serve predominantly as the vehicle for the teaching of 'word level' and grammatical skills.

Guided Reading

In addition to developing reading using an enlarged text common to the whole class, the NLS format provides for Guided Reading sessions during the 20 minute Group and Independent Work slot of the Literacy Hour. This is presented as 'the counterpart' to Shared Reading: whereas during the whole-class shared reading sessions the teacher will have been modelling the processes *for* the pupils, the Guided Reading sessions focus on

pupils' own independent reading. Pupils are differentiated into ability groups and allocated texts matching the reading level of the group; thus each pupil in a particular group will be reading their own copy of the same text. The texts through which pupils will progress are to be 'of graded difficulty', and 'will often be selected from reading schemes or programmes....' The teaching format for these sessions at Key Stage 1 involves teachers introducing the text to the group to familiarise them with the overall context of the story and pointing out any key words they need to know. Pupils then read it independently while the teacher assesses and supports each pupil in the group. This is followed by a discussion of the story, print concepts, significant/difficult words etc.

Guided Reading is described as 'a fundamental part of each school's literacy programme...[which] in effect...takes the place of an individualised reading programme and, as a carefully structured group activity...significantly increases time for sustained teaching.' The 'individualised reading', which Guided Reading replaces, involved children reading 'one-to-one' with their teacher, using a book that was (usually) chosen by the child from a range of books at the level the child was assessed to have attained. Pupils thus had the opportunity to establish a personal engagement with, and interest in, the book prior to reading it (and for the teacher to establish an engagement that was particular to the needs of a specific child). Under the NLS, however, it is the teacher who selects the text for the group, and thus this element of personal choice – and with it, the child's particular 'investment' in the reading session might be seen as being reduced. These changed dynamics are likely to result in teaching that is focused upon the external objectives of the Guided Reading session rather than intrinsic pupil need, it might be suggested – particularly since 'Teaching needs to be brisk and purposeful – the whole group session will take only 10 or 12 mins.' (*Module 4*, p 20)

As with the Shared Reading sessions, the exploratory stage of the study looked at the ways teachers were working within the NLS guidelines to develop reading. This activity, too, is described in *Module 4* (p 17) as being concerned with aspects of phonics, word level and grammatical work:

Teacher's role:

- *to support children while they read independently;*

- *using phonic and word recognition strategies;*
- *cross-checking their reading for sense;*
- *identifying and correcting their own reading errors;*
- *inferring unknown words from grammar and context;*
- *checking inferences against spelling patterns;*
- *learning and re-reading new words.*

Child's role:

- *to read unknown texts independently, learning and applying the skills above.*

The Module gives detailed examples of how the teaching will be carried out and these include ideas for helping children 'tune in' to the story by linking it to their own experiences and, in the follow-up, to give personal responses to what they have read. The exploratory study, then, considered Guided Reading both in terms of the 'skills' with which the NLS is particularly concerned, and also with regard to opportunities provided for pupil engagement and response - how were pupils engaging with the book and session as a whole and what did they do during these sessions? Also significant here was the choice of text presented to them: how could these be characterised in terms of developing – in addition to the more mechanical reading skills – the personal response and the positive attitudes towards reading during the early years of schooling, already mentioned.

4.3.1 EAL learners.

In considering the provisions for promoting early reading development in EAL learners, similar issues may be raised as those outlined more generally above. Using enlarged books to develop literacy in my work as a class teacher in multiethnic schools during the 1980s, I observed how these could provide a very useful support for EAL learners. A book that was studied for a week, and read through each day with pace and expression which would enhance meaning, provided a supportive context in which EAL learners could become familiar with the text without the potentially inhibiting 'spotlight' of the 1:1 reading session. The text was modelled for them by others and as they became familiar with it, they could begin to join in with the shared reading when they felt ready. Books with an engaging storyline, attractive illustrations that matched the written text and an element of repetition could be particularly helpful in developing reading with meaning for these pupils (as, indeed, for their monolingual peers). The books provided a

context in which, from a familiarity and understanding of the text as a whole, the type of word and sentence level work with which the NLS is concerned could be developed.

Publications by researchers (Gibbons, 1991; Hudelson, 1994; for example) concerned with the education of EAL learners who are in the initial stages of school and learning to read have similarly highlighted the positive role that shared reading using enlarged texts can play. Gibbons considers the value of shared books as a teaching strategy being dependent on both the choice of book in relation to the needs and understandings of the children and also on how the teacher uses it. Criteria important to bear in mind in choosing books include: use of authentic language rather than that governed (and thus open to distortion) by an attempt to teach particular phonic skills or to use only short, 'simple' words; books whose topic and setting can be related to the child's own experiences; books with large clear pictures which support the text and can thus provide cues for reading the print; books with repetitive, predictable or cumulative text, which aid comprehension and enable children to see themselves as readers, and books with a clear storyline and clear print.

Considering the way in which the book is used, Gibbons emphasises the importance of exploiting the pictures – talking about them, asking questions and using their potential to encourage children to talk about them and relate them to their own experience. This gives an opportunity to assess vocabulary and to model language children appear to be having difficulty with. Books should be read 'many times' with children encouraged to join in, and initially read for enjoyment rather than to develop a teaching point. Children will not tire of re-readings of favourite stories and EAL learners will have more opportunities to comprehend the text. A pointer should be used to focus the children's attention on the print. As children begin to join in, single sentences, then words, and then letters can be framed for particular attention, and when the book is well known it can be used for simple cloze and other activities.

Guidance for teachers concerning children with EAL given by the *Framework* (pp 106-8) also refers to the positive role that shared reading can have for these learners in modelling English through revisiting texts in a shared and familiar context - and in opportunities for teacher and pupils to discuss word meanings and extend vocabulary. However, it has

little to say about the choice of books, other than that pupils '...should work with rich and varied texts that are beyond their independent reading levels' (p 107), and that teachers should consider whether 'the texts selected for shared reading include positive role models and representations from a range of ethnic communities'(p 112). In terms of developing a personal response and positive attitudes towards reading in these young learners, this may be welcomed as an indication that the Literacy Hour should serve a wider function than that restricted to the development of the mechanical skills of reading, although, as already discussed, such an assumption would appear to be at odds with the more detailed instructions for Key Stage One pupils. A question, then, for the present exploratory study, was to consider the choice of texts used during Shared Reading sessions: how did these compare in terms of the desirable criteria for EAL learners outlined by Gibbons? And did teachers use of them reflect helpful practices for EAL learners?

The specific guidance given by the *Framework* (pp 106-111) regarding EAL learners and Guided Reading contains advice which can be considered as helpful to all Key Stage 1 pupils: 'provide an introduction or orientation to text which will help to activate appropriate prior knowledge, establish questions for resolution and generate motivation'; 'monitor...understanding by careful questioning and discussion...'; 'prompt pupils to use a range of strategies to support their reading'. Here, then, we see an orientation towards constructivist activity recommended by the documents for EAL learners. In addition, teachers are advised to 'pay particular attention to the language structures included in texts, and decide if pupils will need additional support in the introduction to the reading' and to 'consider how to identify and highlight features of the text when introducing and reading it that will help pupils from a range of linguistic and cultural heritages to gain access to its meaning'. Helpful teaching strategies to support EAL learners during these sessions are thus outlined by the NLS. With regard to the choice of texts, however, the documents have little to say other than that they should be carefully selected '...to meet the reading needs of the group as identified in the *Framework,* eg to read on sight high frequency words specific to graded books matched to the abilities of reading groups.' Similar questions, then, to those concerned with the choice and use of the enlarged texts during Shared Reading sessions arose in considering the Guided Reading sessions for EAL learners.

4.3.2 Summary and research questions.

This section, in a consideration of the NLS *Framework* and related documents, has raised questions concerning the strong and explicit emphasis placed by the documents in foregrounding the teaching of graphophonic skills to young children who are in the process of developing both early reading skills and attitudes towards reading. In order to focus the classroom observations on these issues, additional, more specific, research questions have been formulated from within the parameters of the initial research question stated in the Introduction to this chapter:

> In what particular ways do teachers use texts in Shared Reading to assist pupils' reading development? (RQ 1b)
>
> Are the texts used in Shared Reading addressed as having intrinsic value in their own right – towards which teachers assist pupils in constructing their own understandings – or do they serve predominantly as a vehicle for teaching word-level and grammatical skills? (RQ1c)
>
> In what ways do pupils engage with the book and the Guided Reading session as a whole – what is their role during these sessions? (RQ 1d)
>
> Do the texts used during Shared and Guided Reading sessions feature criteria identified by Gibbons as helpful for EAL learners in developing reading? (RQ 1e)

The classroom observations addressing these questions are discussed within three sections addressing: Shared Reading sessions (during the first 15 minutes of the Literacy Hour), Word Level Work sessions (the second 15 minutes of the Literacy Hour) and Guided Reading (occurring during the third 20 minute slot of the Literacy Hour).

4.4 Shared Reading

Module 4 describes the 'key features' of this activity at Key Stage One as being concerned with (the teacher) 'modelling reading strategies' to pupils. This is done through the context of an enlarged text which teacher and children read together (in a 'brisk and expressive' way) – thus providing a step between reading to children and independent reading by children (*Module 1*: 6). Within such a framework, then, how were teachers in the present study using these texts to develop children's reading?

4.4.1 Teachers and pupils reading together

Structure of sessions

Classroom observations in all three classes showed frequent verbal interactions between teacher and pupils taking place throughout the 15 minute slot – the interactions centring on the enlarged text (print and/or illustrations) that the class was studying. This was a somewhat unexpected finding for me (conscious of my own experience in using such books) since the result was that there was little evidence of sustained reading of these texts from beginning to end by teachers and pupils. Rather, teachers appeared concerned to engage pupils in talk about the texts *as they read through them*. However, the practice of the three teachers was not uniform in this respect – each structured the Shared Reading session differently. The following paragraphs summarise the practice observed in the three classes; this is then followed by a discussion of the observations.

The Reception class teacher used the illustrations in the book to engage pupils in talk – in effect encouraging them to 'read the pictures' as a preliminary to a reading of the printed text. On the days observed, the book was read from beginning to end, but with breaks at the end of each page. A typical Shared Reading session, on those days observed, included the following sequence for each page of the book:

- discuss illustration (and sometimes specific words in printed text);
- read through printed text, children joining in if they can;
- further discussion – children's responses, phonic patterning, rhyme etc.

The Year One class observations showed more sustained reading of the book over several pages, although this was not read through from beginning to end on those days observed. This teacher also made space for pupils' thoughts about the pictures of the book as it was read through. For each page:

- (usually) some discussion of, or reference made to, picture;
- read through printed text, children joining in if can. Pupils' interjections re the story/pictures during the reading often taken up by teacher.

The Year Two Shared Reading sessions were the most structured of the three classes, the book – or in one case, a poem – being divided up so that a new page(s)/verse was read each day. Pupils would re-read the previously read pages before tackling the next unread

page. Thus the book would not be read in its entirety until the last day of the Literacy Hour week. The daily sequence:

- pupils re-read previously read pages; some recap questioning by teacher on comprehension/grammatical/'word level' elements in the text;
- questioning by teacher re: the illustration/specific words on the next (unread) page;
- teacher reads page to children;
- more follow-up questioning (as above);
- pupils themselves read the new page.

(In this class, there were very few pupil-initiated comments and the verbal interactions consisted mainly of teacher questioning.)

The observations thus suggested that teachers did not use the enlarged text as a vehicle for developing pupils' reading in the sense of *practising* reading *per se* – i.e. reading through the printed text from start to finish in order to engage with the ideas encapsulated within the text. While the texts themselves represent, in effect, an enlarged version of an ordinary sized book of limited length that a child might choose to read to herself or with an adult in its entirety at a single sitting – they were not modelled as such during these sessions. Rather, *elements* of this process were being modelled for the children – engaging with the illustrations to enhance meaning of the printed text, strategies to 'unlock' difficult words etc.

If, as the NLS directives instruct, shared reading is a modelling activity representing a step between reading to, and independent reading by, children then a particular focus upon the act of reading itself might be expected. While the Year Two teacher did include whole class reading of the printed text (albeit an allocated daily section of the whole), this was not a significant feature in the Reception and Year One class during the sessions observed. Teachers tended to read the text *to* the pupils rather than to explicitly encourage them to join in, although the visual nature of the activity – the teacher pointing to the enlarged print as she read – might be seen as providing a visual prompt for children to read with her.

Reading style

A second, related, observation about shared reading concerned the manner in which the texts were read out aloud. It has been noted above that *Module 4* directs that 'the reading should be brisk and expressive' and (p38) to 'concentrate on enjoying the text and the flow of the story; have as few stops as possible'. Further:

> *Attending to detail should not distract from or too frequently interrupt the enjoyment and understanding of the story as a whole. Be selective about when and where you stop or you are in danger of killing a story through excessive teaching* (*op cit*).

My own experiences in reading aloud with 'big books' – and the resulting realisation that both pace and expression played a crucial role in promoting young readers' understanding of what was being read – has already been mentioned. However, a frequent comment in classroom observation notes made for this project concerned the loss of pace and thus the attention of – in particular – the EAL learners when teachers stopped reading to ask questions, or address a child's interjection. (This is not to negate the importance of an interactive approach to reading; however, as noted above, in Literacy Hours observed, the books were not generally read through in their entirety by teachers and children.)

Reading which is fragmented in such a manner, it can be suggested, makes it more difficult for pupils to establish a concept of the shape of the book as a whole. The major theme of the book and the way in which this builds up may be difficult to access, thus impacting upon overall understanding. Two consequences of this may be identified:

- First - if pupils are thus inhibited in developing a personal construct of meanings within the text, their ability to read the printed word with meaning will likewise be undermined since words that are articulated without understanding attached will be less easily retained. This may have negative implications for the development of the 'word level skills' (the acquisition of the sight vocabulary, for example) with which the NLS is particularly concerned at Key Stage One.

- A second consequence concerns the ability of the child to form a personal response to the themes or 'message' of the text and to the more subtle nuances contained therein – this will, arguably, be more difficult to establish if attention is

> repeatedly diverted away from their own developing response to the text by the necessity of addressing the teacher's agenda.

Considering the extent to which the shared reading was 'brisk and expressive' is more difficult to appraise when data collected is confined to field notes. However, as already suggested, the fragmentation of the shared reading led to a loss of pace and sequentiality important for the generation of meaning – and it is in the reading for meaning that reading with expression manifests itself. The reading in the observed Literacy Hours could not be said to be particularly expressive – although there was some discussion of particular graphic features of the printed text, the messages these conveyed (e.g. direct speech sometimes in capitals, for emphasis) and the way this would affect the reading of the text. Sometimes, it was noted, the shared reading seemed quite 'dirge-like', suggestive more of a decoding exercise than reading for meaning and interest.

To summarise: although the teachers may be regarded as modelling specific reading strategies to their pupils, these were not situated within an overall context of purpose – i.e. the sustained reading of a text in order to engage with its ideas. Nor did all teachers use these enlarged texts for practising reading as such, despite the books providing an obvious potential for this.

There would appear, then, to be some discrepancy between the NLS directives and the reality of these teachers' classroom practice. However, as already suggested, a reading of the documents (NLS *Framework* and *Module 4*) might lead one to the conclusion that the directives themselves do not provide an altogether unambiguous view of shared reading and the teacher's role in implementing it. The definitions given regarding the purpose of this activity – page 11 of the *Framework*, for example – position it almost exclusively as the mechanism by which 'word-level' skills are to be taught, while the more practical advice concerned with implementation in Section 2 of the *Framework* and Appendix 3 of *Module 4*, suggests a wider view of reading as a process to which pupils might bring their own understandings and responses. This lack of clarity is compounded, it might be suggested, by other factors:

- the lack of an overall and explicit rationale based on research into children's learning which might help to inform teachers' understanding and practice;

- format of the documents themselves – featuring long lists of bullet-pointed suggestions and activities which are not themselves organised, or informed by, a rationale;

- the time-constrained nature of the activities – the 15 minutes allocated for Shared Reading gives very limited scope in which to introduce and read a text, allow for children's responses, discuss the text itself and focus upon the associated 'word level work';

- the length and nature of the training given to teachers on how to implement the Literacy Hour – both prior to its introduction and ongoing, by LEA Literacy Consultants. Non-specialist classroom teachers were given 3 days school-based INSET in which to absorb the directives, delivered by school colleagues whose own training was made up of a two day LEA training conference: this would appear to give little time for reflection and discussion of issues. (In interviews for the present project, the Reception and Year One teachers mentioned that in LEA ongoing training sessions they were directed to work in specific ways which did not appear to be open to negotiation. They gave the example of the 15 minutes of specific phonic work they had recently been 'told' to implement each day during the Literacy Hour, using a LEA imposed scheme with which they were not particularly happy.)

There is a sense, then, in which classroom teachers are positioned more as the (passive) receivers of external directives than as professionals who will use their own judgement in deciding what is appropriate for the particular needs of the children they teach. This was rather graphically depicted by one of the teachers who commented that 'I feel as if I'm *strapped* to the [NLS] framework'.

4.4.2 Texts used for Shared Reading

A further example of the perceived constraints under which teachers operate occurred during discussion about the texts they used for shared reading. During one of the observations, the Reception teacher had used a non-fiction book called *What Babies Used to Wear*, which contained concepts that might be regarded as potentially difficult for this age-group – a detailed diagrammatical 'family tree', for example. The printed text was too advanced for the children to attempt to join in with as the teacher read and they therefore listened while she read it to them. For the EAL learners, there was the potential

for confusion in the use of such terms as 'brother', 'cousin' etc, which have culturally specific definitions and, in addition, they had the task of getting to grips with terms used to describe unfamiliar articles of clothing from bygone eras. The teacher commented to the researcher that this would not have been a text she would have selected for this age-group had she not needed to find a book which was compatible with the themes of the school's termly curriculum and topic planning for her class. Again, then, externally imposed criteria are given precedence over a consideration of the particular needs of the pupils in the class.

With regard to the choice of texts used for shared reading, the NLS *Teacher's Notes* direct that these 'should be within children's comprehension levels but above the independent reading level of the majority to provide challenge and extension to children's skills', and that they 'should have varied formats, lively and interesting content and be appropriate for extended use over three or four days a week.' (*Module 4*: 9). On page 12 of *Module 4*, it is further advised that the books 'should have clear and predictable structures'. Beyond this, however, there is little elaboration or guidance on specific features of the texts which might be helpful in developing early literacy skills. This contrasts with the detailed advice (already described) given by researchers such as Gibbons (1991)with regard to EAL learners – which also, it has been argued, represents good practice for the monolingual pupils in the class. How, then, could the texts in those Literacy Hours observed be characterised?

Reception Class

One of the books used has already been discussed (above). Two others – a long poem, *Hairy Maclary from Donaldson's Dairy* and a traditional tale, *The Three Little Pigs*, featured the lively, interesting content recommended by the NLS and the cumulative/repetitive text linked to large clear pictures advocated by Gibbons (*ibid*). Both books were within the children's comprehension levels and were enjoyed by the class, with the humorous illustrations stimulating much comment and laughter. However, in considering them as material for *shared* reading, in which children would join in actively with the teacher, these books featured printed texts which were both lengthy and with some difficult vocabulary. This tended to result in the teacher reading the text to the class rather than teacher and pupils reading together (children were, however, able to join

in with the repetitive elements). Thus the recommendation that books used for shared reading will be 're-read' independently by pupils (*Module 4*:12) might be considered a somewhat ambitious aspiration with regard to those books in use during the observations – should 're-reading' be defined in terms of the decoding of the printed text.

Year One Class

The three books used during the observations all featured the desirable criteria recommended by the NLS and Gibbons. *Titch* – a story about a child's frustration with his toys, comparing them with those of his two older siblings, contained subject matter with which most children could identify on a personal level. The book featured a simple cumulative text (but with some vocabulary which would provide challenge for more advanced readers of this age group), with repetitive elements building up into a satisfying resolution, and there were clear illustrations and a close picture/text link. This book, like the second – *Not Now Bernard* – could be 'read' on both a literal and a more sophisticated, emotional, level – giving varied opportunities for reader interpretation and response within what were ostensibly simple texts.

The subject matter of the second book, concerning a young boy's dysfunctional (perceived or actual) relationship with his parents, was contained within short, simple sentences that matched the detailed, colourful illustrations. These illustrations in themselves facilitated a 'reading' of the book which could be made independently of the printed text; they also encapsulated the richer, more subtle meanings of the story inaccessible through reading the text alone. This book supported a range of 'readings', and possible responses – from the simple to the sophisticated and metaphorical – and could therefore be accessed and enjoyed by readers of varying ages and levels of reading proficiency. In providing a rich forum for responses by the reader, the book could be seen as demonstrating to its young readers a wider purpose for reading than the simple mastery of decoding skills – that of a personal engagement, or dialogue with, the book's themes. This book fulfilled most of Gibbon's criteria for EAL learners – authentic language, topic and setting related to children's own experiences, a clear storyline, clear pictures supporting the printed text and repetition within the text itself. However, if assessed in terms of the printed text alone, it might be viewed as falling short of the

NLS's requirements, since the short, simply-worded sentences would be well within the decoding skills of the majority of this age group.

The third book – *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* – featuring a story around the life-cycle of a butterfly, appeared to fulfil all recommended criteria: a printed text that provided some challenging vocabulary for all pupils, which linked closely to the large colourful illustrations and, in the middle sections of the book, contained a cumulative, repetitive storyline. The book had a clear storyline and also contained subject matter which linked amusingly to children's interests in food, sweets etc. Material included in the printed text included the cycle of the days of the week, ordering of numbers 1-6, names of a variety of fruits (and other foods) and the specific vocabulary to describe the metamorphosis of the butterfly; it therefore represented a particularly informative text for children of this age.

Year Two Class

Two books were observed in use and both featured culturally specific texts reflecting the home backgrounds of children in the class or school as a whole. The first – *Big Book of Poetry* – contained a poem called 'Chinese Rain Dragon' on a traditional theme – exhortations to the rain dragon to bring rain to enable crops to grow. The poem, in four verses, was being studied for the week. The layout of the book featured one poem per page – each poem accompanied by an illustration on the general theme of the poem, but not detailed enough to link to specific wording. Thus children were dependent upon their decoding skills in reading the print; however, the subject matter was within their comprehension and with the teacher modelling strategies to help 'unlock' the more difficult vocabulary, they were able, as a class, to read the text successfully. For pupils nearing the end of Key Stage 1, then, this text appeared to be at a level in keeping with the NLS directives to 'challenge', with the teacher's support, their reading skills.

The second book – *Lima's Red Hot Chilli* – featured a family of Indian origin (resident in the UK) and an amusing sequence of events that occur when the little girl, Lima, eats a raw chilli. This book fulfilled most of the criteria set by both the NLS and Gibbons: a text with some vocabulary that would challenge the reading ability of the majority of the pupils in the class, a storyline which was lively and interesting for all children, colourful

illustrations giving some clues for the reading of the text, and an amusing repeated sequence during the second half of the book which could support the less advanced readers in the class. In addition, this was a dual-language book, which highlighted both Urdu (a language of several pupils in the class) and English scripts. However, there was a particular difficulty with this book – the print style and layout used for the English script made it confusing and difficult to decipher. The print itself, though reasonably large in size, was thin and potentially difficult to read from a distance, an effect compounded by the narrow spacing between the words which made it difficult to identify where each began and ended – the effect was thus of a long line of individual letters. In a sense, one needed to be a skilled reader in order to decipher the print at all, making this a difficult book for those in the process of developing their reading strategies and skills.

4.4.3 Summary and reflection

This section has described in some detail the enlarged books observed in use during Shared Reading sessions, and considered them in relation to criteria laid down by the NLS and Gibbons. It was observed that the level of 'challenge' that the books provided in terms of decoding of the print was variable: in the Reception class, those books observed were well above the range of all pupils' independent reading ability, while the Year One Class teacher used some books that were well within the pupils' ability to read independently; it was in the Year Two class that the books appeared to provide the best match of being just above the independent reading range of the majority of the pupils, thus allowing them to join in and apply the reading strategies that the teacher modelled for them.

This section has also discussed the books within the context of other themes raised in this study: those of the external constraints upon teachers (in this instance, the advance curriculum planning required by schools), which may result in practices which are not best suited to the particular needs of pupils at a given time; and that of the importance of fostering pupils' personal response to the literature with which they are confronted. With regard to the latter, a conflict was observed between the NLS requirement for texts that will 'challenge' pupils in terms of accurately decoding the print – and the opportunities offered by some texts for readers to engage with more sophisticated ideas

and concepts through a 'reading' of the illustrated text alongside (what in some books is) a fairly simple printed text. The three books which offered these more subtle readings (in use during the Year One observations) were enlarged versions of popular and established works of fiction by well known children's authors and/or illustrators, and in this feature they differed from the majority of the books available for the teachers to draw upon for their Literacy Hours – many books having been recently created and published as a response to the demands of the Literacy Hour. It may be seen as pertinent, then, to consider the qualities of the 'big books' available for teachers to use.

Interviews undertaken during the present study revealed a range of attitudes towards the material available. The Reception teacher commented that '...the book needs to be of good quality and preferably a "real" book...there is some very poor material contrived especially for the Literacy Hour.' And the team leader of the Section 11/EMA Service was also critical of the provision for minority ethnic pupils, speaking of it as '...a huge issue – even now [March 2000], with pressure, there is not a good range of culturally diverse books available.' She also referred to '...an issue of tokenism – teachers use one book reflecting an ethnic background and think that will do for the year.' The LEA Literacy Consultant commented that hitherto reading materials reflecting cultural backgrounds have not been available but were now [March 2000] 'improving'. One respondent spoke positively about the big books which formed part of the reading scheme used in the school in which she was based – these were 'good' and they reflected the ethnic mix of the pupils – children liked them.

Teachers, then, were sensitive to issues of cultural representation in texts, but only one respondent (the Reception teacher) echoed Gibbons' concern for the 'authenticity' of the books, when she referred more generally to issues of the quality of the texts. (However, these interviews, aiming at a general overview of the Literacy Hour in practice, were carried out at a relatively early stage in the project and did not probe deeply into particular areas of teachers' thinking or practice; more focused questioning would be needed in order to address this area satisfactorily.)

Shared Reading: overall summary of this section

To sum up: Gibbons (1991) points out that the value of shared books as a teaching strategy is dependent upon both the choice of book in relation to the needs and understanding of the children and also on how the teacher uses it. With regard to the former point, the observations for the present study suggested that, in selecting a book, the particular needs of the children were not always paramount - external pressures could take precedence; and the interviews indicated a general lack of satisfaction with the quality and range of material available for teachers to draw upon - particularly with regard to the needs of minority ethnic pupils. However, most books used did display certain recommended features – relevant topic and settings, clear picture/text link and repetitive/cumulative texts. In considering Gibbons' latter point, it was noted that teachers approached the activity of shared reading in different ways; however, in none of the observations was there sustained reading of the texts, and it seemed unlikely that these books would be read 'many times', as Gibbons recommends. The use of the book seemed to be limited to that of a 'backdrop' for teacher-modelled reading (decoding) strategies rather than as a means by which (what might be termed*) reading behaviours* in the wider sense might be demonstrated to pupils.

4.5 Word Level Work

This section of the Literacy Hour, forms the second 15 minutes of the whole class slot, following on from the Shared Reading session. The purpose, at Key Stage 1, is to develop '...accurate reading and spelling strategies by focusing on the common spelling patterns of most phonemes' (*Module 1*: 8). Four elements are to be covered:

- Phonological awareness, phonics and spelling;
- Word recognition, graphic knowledge and spelling knowledge;
- Vocabulary extension;
- Handwriting.

Specific detailed instructions regarding what is to be taught in each term of each year group is given in 'The Termly Objectives' section of the *Framework.* Work to be covered, then, is presented and listed in the form of discrete items unattached to a particular context. However, as already discussed, the *Framework* does mention that

'Shared Reading provides a context for applying and teaching word level skills....' This section of the exploratory study, then, in addition to the research questions concerning the Shared and Guided Reading activities, also poses the question:

> In what ways does the Word Level Work link to the text used during the Shared Reading session? (RQ 1f)

Reception Class

In two of the Literacy Hours observed, the Word Level Work section did not seem to be differentiated from the Shared Reading but was rather incorporated into it. In one of these sessions the teacher discussed particular vocabulary within the book she was introducing to the class, and in the other, children were asked to identify rhyming words within the text when it was read aloud – these were then listed by the teacher on the whiteboard. In the third Literacy Hour, the sound 'sh' – which had appeared several times in words read aloud in the text of the 'big book' – was the focus of a short Word Level session in which the class contributed their own words beginning with this sound; these were then listed on the whiteboard by the teacher, with children suggesting spellings.

In this class, then, the Word Level Work was integrated within the context of the meanings established during readings of the 'big book' and it was noted that children in the class were responding with understanding to the teacher questioning – suggesting that those who answered did not have problems accessing the work at this level.

It was also noted, however, that the EAL learners rarely volunteered answers, suggesting possible difficulties with comprehension. The text used for the work on rhyming words (*Hairy Maclary from Donaldson's Dairy*, referred to in above section) contained some potentially difficult vocabulary for these young EAL learners, with the rhymes taking the form of the name of a dog coupled with a descriptive allusion: 'Muffin Maclay like a bundle of hay'; 'Hercules Morse as big as a horse'; 'Blitzer Maloney all skinny and bony' etc. The elucidation of these rather subtle meanings would have taken time not available during this session and was not attempted by the teacher.

So, although the Word Level Work was contextualised within the 'big book' and was at a level understood by some children in the class, it was not fully accessible to all.

Year One

In this class, the Word Level Work formed a distinct section within the Literacy Hour, and during all three observations, children were involved in ways which were notably active. In one session, sentences taken from the 'big book' were written out on cards – one word per card. Cards were then given to individual children who stood in a random line at the front of the class holding them up. The rest of the class had the task of re-ordering the children and their words to make a comprehensible sentence. This was then written on the whiteboard. On another occasion, in which 'cvc' words were being practised, all children had letter cards – some with a vowel and others with a consonant and three children stood up with their cards to form a word. Following this, one letter had to be changed at a time to form a new word (thus one of those children standing swapped places with another child sitting on the carpet). Children sitting on the floor volunteered their own letter. The resulting words were recorded on the whiteboard and read through at the end of the session.

Two other activities involved the class articulating vowel sounds in different voices (happy, sad, cross, grumpy), children taking turns in leading this activity; and the identification of given 'high frequency' words in the text of the 'big book' and then finding the matching word on a 'word tree' on the classroom wall (each leaf having one of the 'high frequency words' written on it).

Children enjoyed all these activities, and they remained well focused with fewer lapses of attention than when sitting more passively listening to teacher talk and questioning. This was especially true of the EAL learners. It was also noted that these activities provided good scope for the teacher to bring in children who were at varied levels of attainment. Most activities linked to or stemmed from the text of the shared reading book: the jumbled words formed a sentence with a basic structure that was repeated over several pages of the book and had a useful and familiar vocabulary focus of days of the week, numbers and names of different fruit; the 'cvc' word work was introduced

with the word 'not' – part of a refrain repeated throughout the book *Not Now Bernard;* and the vowel and 'word tree' activities were also linked to the text of the book.

Year Two

Here too, the Word Level Work formed a distinct section of the Literacy Hour, though in both sessions, at around 10 minutes in length, it was shorter than the NLS allotted time. As with the other two classes the session was linked to the shared book. Following the reading of the poem 'Chinese rain dragon', the teacher focused on adjectives, asking the children to think of some 'describing words'. By way of answer, a child described the dress she was wearing; the teacher then asked other children to describe their clothes, and finally an EAL learner:

Teacher: Tell me something about your dress, Seema.
Seema: Green dress.
Teacher: Yes – give it to me in a sentence.
Seema: I'm wearing green dress.
Teacher: Yes – green is the describing word. We call that an 'adjective'.

Here, then, is an example of how other pupils' answers provided a model for Seema, which may have assisted her in framing her own response to the teacher's question. Following this, children were asked to think of words to describe the dragon in the poem.

In the second observation, the teacher wrote up a list of words on the board which, she said, 'You should know by now'. Individual children were asked to read one of the words and then identify it in the text (read during the previous Shared Reading session). These were words included on the NLS list of 'high frequency' words, which pupils are to be 'able to read …easily, in and out of context' by the end of Year Two.

<u>Discussion</u>

Broadly speaking, then, all teachers linked Word Level Work to the 'big book'. However, on the occasions observed, there were differences in both approach and emphasis between the three classes. The Reception teacher tended to position this within the context of the text of the book itself, whereas in Year Two, the concepts to be addressed were introduced separately from the book – which was *then* used as the vehicle through which these were practised. In Year One, the book was used more as a

'bridge' to activities that were only tenuously linked with it (the exception was the jumbled sentences activity, which would have provided strong support for reading of the text).

4.5.1 EAL learners

Considering the needs of the EAL learners in particular, more decontextualised (and potentially unhelpful, thereby) activities were observed taking place in the Year One class; however, the especially active and 'fun' nature of these served to keep all children well focused throughout the session – something that was difficult to maintain during sessions in which pupils sat fairly passively while the teacher addressed questions to them. It was in the Reception class – in which activities were more firmly conceptualised within the text of the book itself – that EAL learners appeared to have most difficulty with the Word level work. However, as already discussed, both the level of the books chosen and the curriculum demands made by the NLS on children of this age might be viewed as presenting a particular challenge for young pupils learning English. In one class – Year Two – an example of how EAL learners can benefit from the NLS emphasis upon interactive whole class teaching was observed, with pupil 'modelling' enabling Seema to attempt her own answer to the teacher's question.

4.6 Guided Reading

Classroom observations of Guided Reading sessions are here compared with the format for this activity laid out in the NLS structure presented in *Module 4*. Three Guided Reading sessions were observed – one in each year group – with the observations focusing upon how pupils engaged with the book and the session as a whole and the role that they played during the sessions. The particular features of the texts themselves were also considered.

4.6.1 The NLS format

The NLS gives specific guidance on planning for this 'carefully structured group activity', which is to comprise:

- *book introduction* (2-3 mins)
- *independent reading* (5 mins)
- *return to the text* – to address specific teaching points

- *follow-up* – extension activities

Pupils are to be organised in ability groups, thus facilitating the selection of books matched to the level of the group – but '…with some degree of challenge, i.e. can be read independently with support from an adult.' The books themselves – individual copies in sets of approximately six – should feature '…cumulative vocabulary, sensible grammar and lively and interesting content.' The teacher's role during this activity is 'to support children while they read independently' and the child's role is 'to read unknown texts independently, learning and applying …[decoding] skills….'

The section on 'Teaching Techniques' (*Module 4*: 42) presents a picture of pupils actively engaged. The first part of the session, the 'Book introduction', should be 'brief and lively', '…aiming to stimulate and motivate the children to want to "get in" to the text and read it for themselves.' 'Getting the children to share their ideas helps them "tune in" to the story and focuses them on their own experiences and how these relate to the text.' However, in the short 2-3 minutes that this section lasts, teachers have a fairly full agenda to engage with:

- Introduce title, cover and discuss expectations;
- Quickly work through book page by page looking at pictures, talking through sequence, language patterns, settings, characters, significant events etc. in the text;
- Demonstrate book handling, point out and use print concepts in the Process;
- Identify: - Known words…
  - New words [of] special significance…. (p 21)

During the 5 minute 'Independent reading' slot which follows the Introduction, pupils read their books aloud (employing 'word attack' strategies when they are unable to decipher a word) while the teacher moves around the group monitoring and assessing the reading. She notes several key points to bring to the attention of the group later. In the third part of the session – 'Return to the text' – the teacher focuses on key elements in the book that the children have just read. These comprise both 'word-level' activities (as in the whole-class session) and 'discuss[ion]' of ideas concerned with the story itself: e.g. what children liked about the story and why, what makes it funny, *why* things happened as they did, alternative endings etc. This slot, then, also provides a possible forum for the pupils' 'voice' to be heard and for them to engage imaginatively and personally with the

themes of the story. The importance of the final 'Follow-up' part of the session in giving children opportunities to re-read/visit the story, extend their involvement with the text and reinforce their learning, is also stated in the document (p 44) – and some imaginative ideas are given for activities: re-reading the story as a play, making a group 'big book' version, reading the text onto a tape with sound effects, making a 'character gallery' with captions and speech bubbles, for example.

Guided Reading, then, is portrayed as an activity in which pupils' acquisition of decoding skills will be scaffolded by the teacher (see introductory activities, above) and will be situated within activities with which they are motivated, engaged and actively contributing. The session includes space for a personal response from children, and this plus the range of extension activities suggested, implies that the books used for Guided reading will be 'worthwhile' texts in their own right, in addition to the means by which decoding skills might be practised and acquired. The observations thus focused upon the teaching strategies used by the teacher and the ways in which pupils engaged with the book during the session. The books themselves were also examined.

4.6.2 Classroom observations

Reception Class

Structure of the session. The session observed was not structured according to the directives; rather, a form of the 'introduction' lasted for most of the Guided Reading session. The format followed by the teacher:

1. Cover of book looked at – children in turn tell teacher something they can see in the picture > follow-up question to each child – here an EAL pupil:

P I can see a chair.
T You can see a chair. Who do you think's sitting in the chair?
P Daddy Teddy.
T Daddy – Daddy teddy or Daddy bear.
I can see some little pictures on the wall–what can you see, Lee?

Children asked to find the 'title', put fingers by the first letter and guess the word. This sequence repeated until all words in the title are decoded. Children and teacher read title together, pointing to the words.

The above format was used to look at the pictures and read the print of the whole book.

(15 minutes)

2. Independent Reading: Teacher instructs children to read the book by themselves while she circulates round the other groups.

(3-4 minutes)

(children told to assemble for Plenary)

The 'Independent reading' slot was, then, not monitored or supported by the teacher; instead, she had assisted the pupils in decoding the entire text – this carried out as a joint group activity rather than as an individual exercise. The 'Return to the text' slot, in which the story itself, concepts about print etc might be discussed was omitted altogether. Timings were also elongated, and to the observer, the session did not have a particularly 'brisk' or 'brief and lively' air to it; rather there was a calm and unhurried feel – which seemed to help concentrate the children's attention on the activity. This concentration continued during the unsupervised 'Independent reading slot', during which these young children remained mainly 'on task' despite the teacher's absence.

Considering the nature of the children's engagement with the book – this appeared to be mediated through the teacher's questioning and instructions. The pupils supplied the answers to the questions - mainly 'IRF' in style - and in unison carried out the instructions (pointing to specific words, turning the page etc). Thus their interaction with the book was in a sense framed for them by the teacher. However, the questions about the pictures were to a limited extent 'open' – and when there was a difference of opinion between several pupils about what was represented in one of the illustrations, the teacher allowed a short discussion on this to develop, without imposing the 'correct' interpretation. She then pointed out to them that a reading of the printed text might help resolve the issue. At several appropriate points, the teacher also related the content of the book to children's own experiences: 'Daddy's giving the teddy a hug. Do your mummies and daddies give you a hug before you go to bed?' To a limited extent, then, reader response was facilitated *during* the reading; but there was no space for more general reflection or for pupils to initiate their own thoughts outside of the teacher's questioning – for instance by invited comments after the book had been read.

After the teacher had left the group, there was some interaction between the children concerning their reading of the book while they read: one child asked another how to read a word; there were several instances of children correcting each other's reading and one child tried to take a controlling role, directing the others to turn the page. Towards the end of the session, a dispute arose over who had finished their reading first. There was no discussion about the pictures or the story itself. Interesting for the observer, an EAL learner – who appeared very quiet when the teacher was present – took on an authoritative role once the group were alone, and some of the children looked to her to help them with decoding. She herself was corrected by one of the group when she left out the conjunction 'and' in her own reading. To an extent, then, children were able to substitute for the teacher's absence by assisting each other.

Teaching strategies. In her teaching strategies, this teacher implemented Gibbons' (1991) exhortation to exploit the pictures – more time was spent looking at these than on decoding the print, and through 'reading the pictures' the pupils were prepared for the vocabulary they would need to read the simple text. On each page, the sentence to be read was made up of the same two words, repeated throughout the book, plus two nouns relating to the particular picture: 'My book and my ball'; 'My milk and my teddy' etc. 'My' and 'and' could thus be practised as sight vocabulary (through repetition) and the strategy that the teacher used for decoding the nouns – if the pupils could not first guess from the picture context – was to encourage them to focus upon the first letter of the new word and its sound as a clue. The teacher thus fulfilled several of the NLS requirements of her role:

- using phonic and word recognition strategies;
- inferring unknown words from grammar and context;
- learning and re-reading new words.

However, with these young learners, this was carried out as a joint group activity rather than one in which the teacher would correct individuals as they read. There was thus a high level of support for the EAL learners, as for all the group, which may have contributed to their remaining focused after the teacher had left the group.

The Text featured a family of bears in human form – mother, father and child. The book appeared to fulfil the desirable criteria suggested by Gibbons and the NLS: subject matter related directly to children - getting ready for bed; illustrations were clear, fairly detailed and attractive; there was a close picture-text link (the layout of the illustration placed the picture close to its corresponding printed word); the text itself was predictable, using a repeated form with two interchanging words and the print was large and clear. This was a short book of 8 pages, created as one of a series graded for difficulty and, explicitly, to practise the 'key words' 'and' and 'my'. The printed text contained a simple descriptive statement on each page, which in itself might not have engendered much reflection on the part of the reader. However, there was a subtext in the illustrations, depicted through the expressions on the parents' faces and postures - of concern and slight irritation with their offspring's continuing preoccupation with his toys and the time he was taking to get ready for bed. There was, then, an opportunity for children to bring their own 'readings' to this book and to respond to a more complex theme than was portrayed through the print alone. This, though, was not picked up by either teacher or pupils.

Year One

Structure of the session. The Year One teacher's Guided Reading session also departed from the structure depicted by the NLS documents. Like the Reception teacher she gave more specific initial support in decoding the print before the pupils attempted an independent reading of the text:

1. Front, back and inside covers scrutinised – the print ('writing') on them discussed, and also the illustration on the front cover – in order to 'guess' what the story will be about.

   Illustrations of the first story in the book looked at; individual children asked to describe these – follow-up teacher questioning to bring out full meanings in the pictures.

   Teacher reads story to children while they follow, pointing to the words.

   Teacher re-reads some of the story, increasing her intonation when reading direct speech – 'what happens to my voice?' Speech marks discussed. Pupils asked to identify specific words.

   (12 minutes)

2. Independent reading – teacher instructs pupils to read the book to themselves while she circulates round the class.

(3 minutes)

(children told to assemble for Plenary)

Instead of previewing the book along with its more challenging vocabulary (as directed by the NLS), then, the teacher read the entire text to the group after discussing the illustrations with them. Again, the 'Independent reading' session was unsupported by the teacher and there was also no 'Return to the text' slot – however, some features of this had been incorporated in the discussion of speech marks (prior to the pupils reading the text for themselves). As with the Reception class, timings were elongated and the session had a calm, unhurried air. Pupils concentrated on reading their books, as instructed, after the teacher had left the group.

Children's engagement with the book. The pupils' engagement with the text was again orchestrated by the teacher's 'IRF' form of questioning, which closely probed the illustrations to bring out their full meaning. Children appeared well focused during this, and there were one or two initiations by pupils keen to offer their ideas; these received a 'confirming' response from the teacher - as possible explanations to the dilemma of the story. Regarding pupil response – again children were not invited to comment more generally on the story, and they did not offer their thoughts on it.

Teaching Strategies. The teaching strategies used by this teacher emphasised comprehension of the story through discussing in detail the illustrations in the book – nearly half of the entire session was spent on this activity. By questioning pupils about the pictures, the teacher ensured that the vocabulary they would meet when reading the printed text was introduced and understood beforehand. This was sensitive to the needs of the EAL learner in the group – elicited by the teacher's questioning, for example, was the information that people who look after animals are called 'farmers'- and that the pictures illustrated a cow being 'pushed' (rather than 'pulled', as had been suggested by a pupil). With regard to the printed text, the function of speech marks was demonstrated and sight vocabulary checked. Pupils, then, were prepared for independent reading by the teacher, but not supported by her while they carried it out.

The Text. The story, *The Cow in the Hole*, was eight pages in length and part of the same graded series as the Reception class's book. The plot concerned the unsuccessful attempts of various people (farmers, policemen and firefighters) to push a cow out of a large hole in the middle of a field; the problem is solved when two children entice the cow out by offering her a bunch of hay. Considering the features of the book: in the characters depicted by the humorous story, it contained subject matter with which the children would have some familiarity (though not necessarily with the setting, of a farm in the countryside); illustrations were clear, colourful and linked closely to the storyline – and the story itself was largely composed of a section repeated (apart from one substituted word on each page) over five of the eight pages. In contrast to the Reception class's book, the story was fully carried in the printed text. In its wording, however, the repeated section of the story had a somewhat stilted feel, and the air of a text which had been contrived in order to feature a particular vocabulary:

"We will get you out,"
said the policemen.
They pushed and pushed.
But the cow did not get out.

"We will get you out,"
said the firefighters.
They pushed and pushed.
But the cow did not get out. (etc.)

In the first line, a more natural form of speech (particularly since this is direct speech) would have been 'we'll' – rather than 'we will'; it would have also given the story more of a feeling of action. And the fourth line reads rather awkwardly with '*did* not get out' – 'would not' (or 'wouldn't') might have given more of a sense of the cow's own agency in determining the course of events. Potentially, then, the priority of promoting decoding skills might be seen as compromising the facility with which pupils are enabled to access meanings in the text.

<u>Year Two</u>

Structure of the session. Of the three Guided Reading sessions observed, that in Year Two was structured most closely to the NLS model. However, whereas in the other two classes, the teachers worked exclusively with the group before leaving them to continue independently, the Year Two teacher circulated several times around the class during this time, attending to all the groups and returning every few minutes to check on the reading group. (She did not sit down with any group during this time.)

1. Pupils asked to look at the pictures (while teacher organises other groups).

   Teacher returns to group: 'Have a look at the title – what do you think the book's going to be about?' Pupils asked in turn to predict the content.
   (approx 5 minutes)

2. Teacher instructs children to start reading (leaves group).
   Pupils read their books independently.

   Teacher returns and stands behind each child's chair listening to reading – checks decoding and comprehension, (leaves group).

   Pupils continue reading.

   Teacher returns and checks while children continue reading.
   (approx 10 minutes)

This Literacy Hour ended rather abruptly (cut short by 15 minutes) when the class was summoned to an unscheduled Assembly - there was thus no opportunity for a 'return to the text' slot, should this have been planned. However, before they adjourned, the reading group were invited to tell the rest of the class about the story they had been reading and this would have given the teacher an opportunity to check their comprehension. In common with the other two classes, timings for the Guided Reading session were elongated; however, the actual time spent by the teacher supporting this group was much less overall. In contrast to the other two classes, it was during the 'Independent reading' part of the session that the teacher provided most support for the children's reading; the 'introduction' to the book was left more or less to the pupils to manage for themselves.

Children's engagement with the book. There was, then, no discussion between teacher and pupils about the illustrations, characters, setting or events of the story. Nor were pupils invited to give a personal response or reflect upon the story's themes. Their engagement with the book, apart from an initial perusal of the pictures, appeared to be mainly that of a decoding exercise. It was noted that they read the book continuously: having come to the end, they went back to the beginning and read it over again. This was repeated several times. The teacher's role, then, was confined to that of supporting strategies for reading of the printed text – however, in this it was in keeping with the NLS stated teacher's role.

The Text. This was 24 pages in length, with two sentences on each page and with a picture to illustrate each. From a scheme of graded reading books, the story – *Sir Ben and the Dragon* – featured a medieval knight who was asked by the king to make a 'big red' dragon, that had turned up in a nearby town, 'go away'. The knight, Sir Ben, who was 'not a very brave knight', ends up making friends with the dragon, who, it transpires, is simply upset because 'no one likes me' and everyone runs away from him. The setting – of knights in armour in a medieval rural England – would be difficult for most children in an inner-city, multiethnic school to relate to, and it has been noted that the teacher did not discuss this aspect of the book at all with the pupils (though with it comprising one of a set featuring the same characters' adventures, the children may have already possessed a background familiarity with the context). However, the underlying themes in the story – feelings of isolation (the dragon), inadequacy, fearfulness (the knight) – would be familiar to all schoolchildren and often the subject of teacher-pupil discussions in reference to pupils' own interpersonal relationships.

The pictures were clear, colourful and gave some clues to the printed text. With the subject matter centring around the inner emotions of the characters, there was an inevitable lessening of the picture-text link, and this was compounded by the direct speech – also a prominent feature in the story. Counterbalancing this, however, were the short simple sentences, which, for children in this year-group, should not have presented too much of a challenge. This format, though, gave a rather stilted feel – and had the air of a text in which priority was given to grammatical concerns and the practice of a controlled vocabulary:

> "I will play my guitar," said Sir Ben.
> "Then the dragon will feel better."
>
> Sir Ben sang another happy song.
> "I feel better now," said the dragon.
>
> "Where is your home?" asked Sir Ben.
> "I haven't got one," said the dragon.
> "You can come and live in my house,"
> said Sir Ben.
>
> "You are a very brave knight," said the King.
> "You made the dragon go away."

The somewhat stilted feel of the text was reflected in the rather expressionless tone in which the children read their books out aloud – suggestive less of a text read with comprehension than of print decoded.

For the EAL learner in the group, then, potential problems may have occurred with both the subject matter and the way in which the text itself was structured. With little teacher-supported previewing of the book before it was read by the pupils, this child in particular may have experienced difficulties in decoding the print; she was, however, supported to some extent by the teacher during reading.

4.6.3 Summary and reflection

Structure of sessions

Considering first the structure of the session, all three classes departed radically from the NLS model during those sessions observed, as shown by Figure 4.1 on the following page, which depicts the format adopted by each class alongside the NLS model (*Module 4*:21). There was thus no 'Return to the text' or 'Follow-up' session in any of these classes – during which the text and the wider themes of the story itself could be 'discussed' and extended. In two of the classes, the teacher was absent during the part of the session in which her primary function – of supporting children while they read independently – was taking place. In the other class, the teacher was absent during the 'Book introduction' slot, in which the aim '...is to stimulate and motivate the children to get into the text and want to read it for themselves'.

These teachers, then, substituted their own very individual forms of 'guided reading': the Reception class and Year One teachers supported their pupils' reading by guiding them through the entire written text *before* the children read it independently, while the Year Two teacher focused almost exclusively upon supporting the children's decoding skills while they read independently. Probably as a result of the elongated timings, all three sessions lacked the brisk pace and 'sense of urgency' promulgated by the NLS; however, it was observed that this may have had the positive effect of focusing the children's attention on the text and their reading – which continued despite their teacher's absence attending to other groups.

Table. 4.1 Structure of observed Guided Reading sessions

	NLS	Reception Class	Year One	Year Two
1. **Book Introduction** **(2 - 3 mins)**	*Introduce title, cover and discuss expectations* *Quickly work through book page by page looking at pictures, talking through sequence, language patterns, settings, characters, significant events, etc. in the text* *Demonstrate book handling, point out and use print concepts in the process* *Identify:* *-Known words, i.e. words met in previous texts* *-New words, i.e. those with special significance – locate them in the text, ensure children can recognize them*	Cover of book looked at – children in turn tell teacher something they can see in the pictures> T. follow-up question to each child. Children asked to point to initial letter of first word of title and guess the word from the sound. Sequence repeated until all words in title are decoded. Children and teacher read title together, pointing to the words. This procedure (above) Used to look at pictures and read print of each page in the book – teacher and pupils working together. (15 minutes)	Front, back and inside covers scrutinised – the print ('writing') on them discussed, and also the illustration on the front cover – in order to 'guess' what the story will be about. Teacher and children look at the illustrations to the story> detailed teacher questioning to re: meanings. Teacher reads story to children while they point to the words. Teacher demonstrates intonation, re: 'speech marks' in text. Teacher asks children to identify given words text. (12 minutes)	Children asked to look at the pictures (while teacher organises other groups). Teacher returns to group and asks each child to predict the content of the story by looking at the cover. (5 minutes)
2. Independent Reading **(5 mins)**	*Children read aloud at their own pace* *Teacher monitors and supports to maintain pace, accuracy and sense* *During the reading, Teacher notes several key points for the group* *Teacher assesses individuals as they read as they read*	Teacher instructs children to read independently while she circulates around the other groups. (3-4 minutes)	Teacher instructs children to read independently while she circulates around the other groups. (3 minutes)	Teacher instructs children to begin reading & leaves group. Children read their books independently. Teacher returns and moves around group monitoring and supporting reading. Teacher leaves group – children continue reading. Teacher returns and resumes monitoring/supporting. (9- 10 minutes)
3. Return to the text	*Discuss story: characters, events, places, etc.; find significant words again* *Use discussion to reinforce book and print concepts* *Discuss words that caused difficulties* *Find rhyming words, words starting with the same sound, words beginning with letters in children's names etc.*			
4. Follow-up	*Set follow-up independent re-reading task.*			

Children's engagement with the book

Considering the nature of the children's engagement with the book: in the Reception and Year One classes, this was largely filtered through the teacher's own agenda – in the form of 'IRF' questioning driven towards a decoding of the printed text. This questioning was directed towards specific (named) pupils and there were thus few initiations by the children – either related to the teacher's talk or on ideas of their own that the book and its themes may have raised for them. And with the absence, in these classes, of sections 3 and 4 of the NLS Guided Reading format, the opportunity for wider discussion and personal response was greatly reduced. In the Year Two class there was less teacher questioning (the teacher was largely absent) and so the pupils experienced their books on much more of a private, individual basis than in the other two classes. 'Reading', then, was modelled to all these pupils largely in terms of print decoded, and it was observed that this was how the children continued to interact with their books during the 'independent reading' slot – focusing exclusively, it appeared, upon reading the print, and, having finished the book, returning immediately to the beginning and starting reading over again.

Texts

Turning to the texts used for Guided Reading, and consideration of these in terms of the features identified by Gibbons as helpful for EAL learners' literacy development (and, it has been argued, those of monolinguals who are also in the process of acquiring literacy), the Reception and Year One books appeared to conform in the main to the recommended criteria. The Year Two book had fewer features that would give contextual clues for reading; however, children by now were in their third year of formal schooling and might be expected to be less dependent on this kind of support. The three books were part of graded schemes with controlled vocabulary which increased in complexity as the reader worked through the series and, it was observed, there was evidence of some distortion of language in order to practise particular vocabulary in all three books. More positively, the content of the books offered some scope for reflection of issues more generalisable to children's own lives. However, this potential was not exploited by any of the teachers during the observed sessions.

Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the language and literacy experiences offered to pupils in sections of the Literacy Hour in which teachers interact with children to develop reading, and has given a fairly detailed description of practices observed in the three classrooms in relation to the directives given in the NLS documents. In the sessions that were observed, it was noted that there was considerable variation in the teachers' practice *within* sessions that were nevertheless demarcated according to the NLS Literacy Hour segments (Shared Reading, Word Level Work, Guided Reading etc). The following chapter provides a summary and reflection on salient points from the exploratory phase of the study and then outlines the issues that have emerged to take forward to Phase Two.

Chapter 5

Exploratory Study: summary and reflection

5.1 Introduction

Section **5.2** summarises and reflects upon the main points arising from the observations made in the exploratory study, which aimed to explore teacher-pupil language and literacy practices in the Literacy Hour and to consider whether these were facilitating of accepted good practice for multiethnic classrooms (RQ 1). These observations arose from a fairly detailed description of the (observed) language and literacy experiences offered to pupils in relation to the development of reading, and a consideration of these in relation to both the NLS directives and a social constructivist view of children's learning. The points made are, however, as stated in Chapter 3, impressionistic and specific to their own context, serving to highlight issues for more detailed consideration in subsequent stages of the study. Section **5.3** reports on the issues that have emerged for further study.

5.2 Summary and reflection

Verbal Interactions

- Teacher-pupil verbal interactions appeared to be mainly of a teacher-initiated 'IRF' nature, with little use of the strategies listed in the *Framework* by which pupils' learning might be constructed.

  Reflection: the structure of the Literacy Hour itself, along with the requirements in terms of curriculum to be covered, might be viewed as implying such a teaching style.

- Informal talk during the group and independent work sessions included that which featured pupils and peers assisting each other with their tasks and also engaging in more discursive conversations related to Literacy Hour topics and activities. EAL learners, noticeably reticent during teacher-led sessions, were observed confidently participating in these conversations.

Reflection: peer group talk may constitute an additional site for learning – particularly for EAL learners.

Shared Reading

- 'Comprehension is the primary aim of reading' (*Module 4*: 5) and the focus of Shared Reading at Key Stage 1 'is upon modelling reading strategies'. Arguably, then, these 'strategies' must include modelling 'normal' reading behaviours with books – usually, a sustained reading of the entire text. This did not tend to happen in the classes observed; reading *per se* was fragmented, with teachers modelling *elements* of the reading process. Furthermore, in two of the classes on the observation days, there was not an emphasis on teachers and pupils reading together at all – rather of the teacher reading to the pupils.

Reflection: (i) Class readings of the whole text in an expressive manner constitute a supportive framework for practising reading skills – important for all early readers, and particularly so for EAL learners. Readings of whole texts also facilitate the construction of meanings and understandings which can provide both a context for word and sentence level work and also the personal connection with the themes of the book – which constitutes the overall purpose in reading.

(ii) Possible reasons why this did not occur: a) it is possible to identify some ambiguity within the NLS documents themselves with regard to what is required - and this is not helped by the lack of an explicit rationale based on research into children's learning, by which teachers' practice might be guided. b) the nature of training and advice from LEA on classroom implementation of the NLS.

- Texts used did not all conform to the NLS criteria of being within children's comprehension levels but above the independent reading level of the majority: some books were above and others below this level.

Reflection: (i) external demands of school curriculum planning can compromise the particular learning needs of pupils.

(ii)complex meanings and sophisticated 'messages' can be contained within the illustrations of children's books, some of which have a minimal printed text. A number of these are by highly regarded children's authors. Does the NLS provide too narrow a view of the process of 'reading', confining this primarily to an exercise in decoding print?

Guided Reading

- In the three Guided Reading sessions observed, none of the teachers implemented the full NLS format.
- Two of the teachers were absent during stage 2 ('Independent reading') of the session and therefore did not enact their primary role in supporting children while they read independently.

  Reflection: teachers in these sessions were, therefore, not available to provide 'scaffolding moves' for individual children as they read.

- All three teachers omitted the third ('Return to the text') and fourth ('Follow-up') stages of the session.

  Reflection: it is during these last two stages of the session that opportunity arises for wider discussion and pupil initiation and response to what has been read. In the sessions observed, then, pupil roles were largely confined within the agenda of the teacher's questioning and to decoding the printed text.

- Texts for Guided Reading are chosen, under the NLS directives, by the teacher. All of those observed were part of graded schemes in which, to an extent, the language was contrived to practise particular decoding skills.

  Reflection: (i) children are denied the opportunity to make a personal connection with the book that they will be reading – as was formerly the case during 'individualised reading'.

  (ii) 'reading' is presented to children primarily as a decoding exercise. EAL learners may experience difficulty in gaining meaning from the text.

5.3 Emerging issues

With my own professional background within the field of study, issues for further consideration that have developed from the research I have carried out during the exploratory stage of the study, and which form the basis of the following chapters, are outlined below:

- Given that the concept and purpose of the Literacy Hour is 'to promote "literacy instruction" ' through 'high quality oral work' (*Framework* p8), in what ways might the teacher-pupil verbal interactions taking place during Shared and Guided Reading sessions be considered to be promoting literacy development?

The exploratory study has described and reflected upon the activities taking place during Literacy Hour observations; however, a description of *activities* observed and documented in handwritten notes cannot adequately capture the detail of the verbal interactions between teachers and pupils (and, it has been suggested, between pupils and their peers) through which learning takes place. All three teachers, although operating under the same externally prescribed curriculum and teaching methods, approached Shared and Guided Reading in different ways. In one aspect, though, there did appear to be a uniformity about the nature of their pupils' experience: this was contained within a 'criteria of relevance' imposed by the teacher, largely through 'IRF' type questioning. There are, however, varying views amongst researchers regarding the place of this type of exchange in furthering children's learning: Wells (1993), for example, reports both positive and negative evaluations of 'triadic dialogue' by authors – all of whom appealed to the principles of sociocultural theory to justify their evaluations. The next stage of the present study, then, uses audio-recorded Literacy Hour sessions to look at the detail of teaching practices and how learning is promoted through talk/discussion/under the Shared and Guided Reading formats.

- Initiations by pupils – in which they have the opportunity to introduce their own 'frame of reference' into the learning discourse – appear to be largely restricted to the group and independent work slot of the Literacy Hour, when they were observed to engage in informal conversations with peers which were often linked to Literacy Hour topics. How can these conversations be characterised – and in what sense can they be considered to be providing supplementary or alternative 'sites' for development?

- How are teachers – traditionally treated as professionals competent to make their own decisions on the type of learning experiences appropriate to their pupils – positioned by the new curriculum?

- With regard to the conception of literacy encapsulated within the NLS documents: how appropriate is the model of literacy development for pupils in the initial years of formal schooling in multilingual classrooms?

5.4 Progression of the study

Four 'emerging issues' are outlined above. The first of these, concerned with didactic teacher-pupil talk and the development of reading, is explored in the first part of Phase Two of the research: chapters 7-10. 'Literature Review 2', addressing the theoretical underpinning of the study's 'social constructivist' approach and the classroom practice that is informed by this approach, precedes these chapters.

The second issue, that of talk between pupils themselves and the relevance of this for development, is explored in the second part of Phase 2: chapter 11.

The third and fourth issues, concerning teacher autonomy and the appropriateness of the NLS conception of literacy, are touched upon throughout the thesis.

Chapter 6

Literature Review (2): Developing a focus on learning

6.1 Overview of the chapter

The aim in this Literature Review is to establish the theoretical frame underpinning the study – that of a social constructivist approach to learning – and to consider the key concepts of this in terms of their application to classroom practice. Addressing the issues emerging from Phase One of the research, the chapter concentrates on two main areas – the role of talk in learning and the development of reading with young children in multiethnic classes. Both the NLS and wider research into children's learning emphasise the importance of an interactive classroom environment, and the first part of the chapter explores the more theoretical development of these ideas in relation to classroom practice. It goes on to outline the findings of two studies of Literacy Hour classroom discourse and then to define the present study within the framework established by the previous discussion.

The second half of the chapter briefly reviews different models of curriculum practice related to reading development and draws some parallels between a social constructivist view of learning and the 'New Literacy' as identified by Willinsky (1990). The varying approaches are captured within the framework of teacher-pupil interaction developed by Reed *et al* (1996). Classroom strategies for developing reading that feature constructivist practices set within the sociability of the classroom are then explored, these being defined both in terms of the more formal decoding skills – letter/word recognition, for example – and as personal response to the meanings within the text itself. The final part of this section considers reading-related classroom research in the Literacy Hour and that into the specific needs of EAL learners.

6.1.1 Introduction: reconceptualising learning

Observing the long tradition of psychological research on learning and, in more recent years, a great deal of sociolinguistic and educational research on communication in the classroom, Mercer (1994) argued that, nevertheless, what still has to emerge is a robust theory of teaching and learning as social practice. He proposed a 'neo-Vygotskyan' approach to learning, which treats cognitive development as a culturally based process, social rather than individual, and as a communicative process, whereby knowledge is shared and understandings are constructed in culturally formed settings. Incorporating elements of Vygotsky's work with post-Vygotskyan research could help build new theoretical links between different disciplines concerned with language use and teaching and learning in social context. Mercer gives examples, in the work of Edwards and Westgate (1987) and Edwards and Mercer (1987), of theoretical affinities between sociolinguistic research on classroom discourse and learning and psychological research, and, in the work of Heath (1983) and Street (1984) with the strand of anthropological research which treats literacy as social practice. Looking more particularly at talk and learning, neo-Vygotskyan lines of enquiry can be found in research into early language acquisition and cognitive development (e.g. Bruner and Haste, 1987; Wells and Nicholls, 1985; Wood, 1988); the study of collaborative learning (e.g. Forman and Cazden, 1985; Baker-Sennet, Matusov and Rogoff, 1992) and in the study of the relationship between teachers and learners.[1]

For the present study, Mercer's advocacy of a neo-Vygotskyan approach provides a helpful conceptualisation of learning, which is now (under the Literacy Hour format) more socially positioned – taking place in group and whole class sessions (the Literacy Hour has shifted the focus away from individual learning) – and placing emphasis upon *interactive* teaching and learning processes. Children's contributions are to be encouraged and extended, implying a view of learning as constructed rather than simply transferred from teacher to pupil. The following sections further elaborate a neo-Vygotskyan view in relation to classroom talk and learning.

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[1] See discussion in following section.

6.2 The role of talk in learning

Wells and Chang Wells (1992) have referred to the 'misconception' by which talk in classrooms is often viewed as straightforward and unproblematic – a transparent window through which to view the 'real' issues of teaching and learning. The explanation for this is to be found in the essentially individualistic conception of learning contained in the two competing ideologies that have historically dominated debate about the goals and means of education. These may be briefly characterised as that which conceives of schooling as a form of socialization in which 'culturally valued knowledge and skills...are delivered according to a predetermined schedule designed by experts outside the classroom' – and that which, in opposition to this ideology, attempts to place the learner at the centre of the educational enterprise, emphasising creativity as opposed to conformity and active exploration as opposed to passive reception (p 27). However, the authors point out, in both ideologies the learner is viewed as independent and self-contained, and learning activities as taking place *within* individuals rather than in transactions *between* them. Furthermore:

> *Because knowledge – whether learner-constructed or teacher-transmitted – is taken in both ideologies to be an individual possession, with language serving only to communicate what is known, little attention is given to the task-related discourse in which knowledge is collaboratively constructed, validated, and modified in the purposeful activities in which learners engage with others in the cultural communities of home or school.*
>
> (p 28)

Education as dialogue

An alternative to these individualistic views of learning is represented by the sociocultural perspective developed by Vygotsky and extended by his colleagues and followers – in which a central tenet is the interdependence of individual and society, each creating and being created by the other. Both are the outcome of the innumerable occasions of purposeful interpersonal interaction that make up everyday life. Human development and learning, then, are viewed as intrinsically social and interactive and learning and teaching can be conceptualised as 'social transaction' (*ibid*).

Education becomes a communal activity in which children are both *agents* of knowledge-making as well as the recipients. Within such a view, a particular focus will be upon

collaborative activity and the ways in which 'adults enter dialogue with children in ways which provide hints and props to 'scaffold' new forms of thinking, before their significance is fully realized by the child concerned' (Webster *et al*, 1996:57). Talk, then, is seen to be a central and constitutive part of activity: in Wells' view, 'education *is* dialogue'. Wells and Chang Wells (*op cit*) outline the implications that follow from this, which concern both teacher and learner. For the learner, it will be through participation in interaction in the context of joint problem solving with adults that they encounter the meaning-making resources of their culture and stretch their understanding to find common ground with more skilled and knowledgeable interlocuters.

> *Then, from having engaged in these activities in the mode of social interaction, they are able to appropriate the dialogic forms of conversation so that they become a resource for thinking in the internal dialogue of inner speech and in the construction of extended spoken and written monologue.*
>
> (Wells and Chang-Wells,1992:32, quoting Wertsch and Toma, 1990)

From the teacher's point of view, the talk occurring in such activities gives insights into the state of individual students' understanding and this can then inform the provision of succeeding learning experiences – appropriately pitched to the pupil's level. Through this talk, too, the teacher is able to introduce and demonstrate the relevant 'cultural tools' – i.e. the appropriate forms and functions of discourse – in a manner by which the teaching is contingently responsive to pupils' own articulated understandings.

> *In sum, it is in the talk through which tasks are defined, negotiated and evaluated, and by means of which the students' participation is monitored and assisted, that students and teachers engage in the dialogic co-construction of meaning, which is the essence of education.*
>
> (*ibid* p 33)

Pertinent to the present study, in which talk between children and their peers during the Literacy Hour is an additional area of exploration, Wells draws attention to the work of Rogoff (1990), researching how collaborative work between children themselves provides them with challenges which can also enhance development.

The National Literacy Strategy

The Literacy Hour may be regarded as containing hybrid features of Wells and Chang-Wells' more 'traditional' model of schooling along with their conception of education as dialogue. In its format, the Literacy Hour comprises a detailed literacy curriculum, 'predetermined' with regard to both its content and the mode in which this is to be delivered at classroom level. There is, however, a particular emphasis made upon 'discursive...high quality oral work' and 'interactive' teaching, in which pupils' contributions are to be 'encouraged, expected and extended' (*Framework,* p 8). There is little stated rationale or elaboration regarding these aspirations, however, and an aim of the research is to explore how they are being realised in actual classroom practice. The following section expands upon the themes introduced in the above introductory section on the role of talk in learning.

6.2.1 Social constructivism

Wells and Chang Wells (*op cit*) outline three basic principles upon which the theory is based and which stem from a 'coherent theory' of learning and teaching originating in the work of Piaget and Vygotsky, extended and developed by scholars in a variety of disciplines - Barnes (1976), Britton (1970), Bruner (1971), Moll (1991) and Wood (1988), for example.

Regarding the first principle, studies into cognitive and linguistic development by researchers such as Piaget and Donaldson (1978) demonstrated that the acquisition of knowledge – rather than being passively received by the learner – is actively constructed by each individual as a result of their interactions with the external world. What the learner is able to learn in a particular situation is dependent upon the level of existing knowledge and on the strategies of meaning making which the learner can bring to bear upon the situation in which he or she is engaged.

Second, although it results in an individual resource for interpretation and action, this process of knowledge construction is essentially social and cultural in nature. It is through participation with more mature members of the community in socially significant purposeful activities that learners encounter the knowledge and skills that are valued in

their culture, as these are enacted in the problem-solving strategies deployed and in the discourse that accompanies, and in some cases constitutes, the activity. By thus engaging with others in collaborative action and in the co-construction of meaning, learners are assisted to take over these cultural resources and make them their own.

Third, in all these activity settings, collaborative problem-solving and the learning it engenders is mediated and facilitated by cultural practices and artefacts. These include artefacts, e.g. wheels, levers, clocks etc – and also modes of representation, e.g. pictures diagrams etc. They also include social practices, such as co-ordinating action according to expertise, dividing responsibility etc. These are all 'tools' which we inherit but which were invented by previous generations of problem-solvers.

The most important 'tool'; is generally agreed to be discourse – the interactive and constructive meaning-making that occurs in purposeful linguistic interaction with others. The words and structures of the linguistic code provide a resource for referring to objects and events etc at issue in the activity in which participants are engaged – and also enables participants to refer, reflexively and reflectively, to the discourse itself. The discourse is also itself a form of action since in producing and responding to linked and reciprocally related moves that make up a sequence of discourse, participants guide and influence each other's understanding of, and involvement in, their joint endeavour. However, despite using the same linguistic code, neither a common reference nor co-ordination of action can be assured since, as a result of different life experiences and different concerns in engaging in the interaction, participants in discourse always 'speak with different voices' (Bakhtin, 1986). For successful communication, therefore, participants must strive to achieve and maintain a shared *intersubjective* understanding of the matter in hand (Rommetveit, 1979) – adjusting their perspective to see from another's point of view. When 'internalised' the discourses that one has engaged in *intermentally* with others become a powerful resource for *intramental* problem-solving and reflection, through what Vygotsky referred to as 'inner speech'.

Social constructivist classroom practice

With regard to teaching and learning *per se*, Webster *et al* (1996) draw attention to three concepts which encapsulate the 'essence' of social constructivist theory: 'scaffolding', the 'zone of proximal development' and 'appropriation.'

Scaffolding

This term (Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976) provides a metaphor for the quality of teacher-intervention in learning. Aiming at a new level of independent competence on the pupil's part, the teacher supports the pupil's activity without taking over. This involves taking steps to reduce the degrees of freedom in carrying out a task so that pupils experience success at each stage – constraining a problem to smaller specifics without losing sight of the whole. Thus the teacher's role is to act 'contingently' – interventions occurring in order to assist a child's performance of a task, particularly when difficulties arise. She therefore needs to gauge a pupil's or group's moment-to-moment understanding of a task, providing more information and help when needed, asking questions to move thinking forward and allowing more initiative when pupils succeed – maintaining interest, purpose and momentum.

'Zone of proximal development'

The second concept, termed by Vygotsky the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD), was described by him as:

> *the distance between the child's actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving' and the higher level of ' potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.*
>
> (Wertsch, 1985:67-8)

Successful teaching is thus pitched just ahead of pupils' current achievements – and in assisting a pupil in this way, notions of 'scaffolding' will be brought into play. (Pupils who can accomplish tasks independently, therefore, are unlikely to be working in their ZPD.) Dialogic interaction provides the support children require in order to grasp new concepts.

Appropriation

The concept of 'appropriation' describes how children pick up (or appropriate) the ideas and opinions of others who share their social and cultural contexts – for example, their family's attitude towards books and their patterns of literacy use. From the teacher's point of view, Webster *et al* describe the term as referring to the reciprocity of teaching and learning and the ability of teachers to consider pupils' perspectives as well as their own, to learn from the way in which pupils respond and the ideas they present, to adjust their teaching reciprocally as they interact with pupils in the classroom.

Social constructivism and the Literacy Hour

The social constructivist approach thus views learning as an interactive and communicative activity, whereby knowledge is shared and constructed in specific cultural settings. However, the implementation of such ideas with relatively large groups of learners is clearly problematic, since the teacher must remain contingently responsive to the needs of learners who may be at a variety of levels of development. During the Literacy Hour, two thirds of the session is conducted with the teacher working with the whole class group, the remaining third with a group of around six children; there are thus implications here for effective implementation of a constructivist view of learning. Webster *et al,* underlining the need to revisit definitions of the ZPD in this respect, suggest that to be effective, the theory needs to be illustrated and extended with reference to how adults respond to children in busy school contexts. One of the aims of the research is to explore particular ways in which teachers assist children's reading development within a format that has replaced more individualised teaching practices with whole class and group teaching sessions: what are the implications for a 'constructivist' view of learning under such a format?

6.2.2 Revisiting the 'ZPD'

Moll and Whitmore (1993), in addressing such difficulties, have proposed a broadening of the concept of the ZPD – which, they assert, has hitherto been too narrowly interpreted as a transmission of skills from adult to child:

> *Limitations are largely overcome when the concept is understood as part of a broader theoretical framework that takes the development of mind in social practice as its central problematic.*
>
> (p 39)

Moll and Whitmore introduce the concept of 'collective' and 'interrelated' zones of proximal development and propose a transactional view of the zone focusing upon the co-construction of meaning as facilitated by the various activities that make up classroom life. Central to this is the emphasis on the active child developing the cultural means to assist his or her development, with the role of the adult being to provide mediated assistance, indirect help that 'does not displace the direction and control children give to the tasks and activities' (p 40). The goal of this mediated assistance, they say, is to make children consciously aware of how they are manipulating the literacy process, achieving new means, and applying their knowledge to expand their boundaries by creating or reorganising future experiences or activities.

> *[An] apt definition of the zone, at least as applied to classroom analysis, must include the active child appropriating and developing new mediational means for his or her own learning and development.*
>
> (*ibid* p 40)

Hatano (1993), considering such a reconceptualisation of the Vygotskyan concept of knowledge acquisition, also suggests that the ZPD has been hitherto too narrowly interpreted in terms of 'cultural transmission'. This is often accompanied by a set of 'hidden assumptions': the learner is rather passive in nature; s/he does not have to understand the meaning of the skills taught or construct knowledge that goes beyond them; only the interaction with the teacher, who is always more capable than the learner, facilitates the acquisition; and the teacher is the only source of information and evaluation (p 155). In moving towards a revised constructivist Vygotskyan conception of learning, Hatano identifies four 'revising assumptions'.

Learners are active – humans enjoy taking initiatives and choosing from alternatives – they not only explore objects but interact with other persons spontaneously and tend to be lively and do well when they are allowed to do so. (p 156)

Learners almost always seek and often achieve understanding – frequently supported by prior knowledge. Conversation is 'nearly impossible if participants do not try to

interpret given utterances or are satisfied with an interpretation at a shallow level...people generate an enriched representation of the presented information and try to interpret a given set of information coherently...this competence is frequently supported by their prior knowledge because it enables them to process new relevant information effectively.' Based on their understanding, learners may construct 'knowledge that is in a sense beyond the information given by the teacher...their invented knowledge is not always correct scientifically but is often plausible' (p 156).

Learners' construction of knowledge is facilitated by horizontal as well as vertical interactions . Hatano's third assumption, concerning 'horizontal' interactions, particularly between peers, alludes to the 'substantial' contribution to knowledge acquisition that these can make. One reason for this concerns motivation: 'speaking generally, the less mature member in a vertical interaction is not highly motivated to construct knowledge because she or he knows that the other member possesses that knowledge. In contrast, during horizontal interaction...motivation to disclose...ideas tends to be natural and strong because no authoritative right answers are expected to come immediately. Another reason is that 'the more mature member's knowledge [in a 'vertical interaction'] cannot necessarily be verbalised in a communicable form and even when it is, some part may be ignored by the less mature...on the other hand, a student can often pick out a useful piece of information from other students who are not generally more capable...moreover, some members can be more capable than others at some moment during horizontal interaction' (p 156-7).

Availability of multiple sources of information enhances knowledge construction. Since understanding is 'to find coherence among pieces of information' availability of multiple sources of information is expected to enhance the construction of conceptual knowledge. It is especially beneficial for learners to have external sources of information other than the teacher because 'too much reliance on the authorized answer given by the teacher reduces students' motivation to understand and construct knowledge of their own' (p 157).

Discussion

This conception of learning raises significant points for the present study. While it may be generally recognised that children need to be actively engaged in learning, this is often interpreted narrowly in classrooms, resulting in pupils' 'activity' being restricted largely to that of answering teacher's 'closed' recall questions. This was suggested also in Phase One of the research and in two studies reported in section **6.2.5** of this chapter.

Moreover, the very format of the Literacy Hour, with its prescribed detail defining *what* is to be learnt and *when,* would seem to invite such an interpretation. In his second 'revising assumption', Hatano raises a crucial issue for such programmes – that of the necessity of learners *trying* to interpret and 'enrich' given utterances in order to process these. But how can this be ensured? There seems to be the assumption in the *Framework* (as Bourne points out – section **2.3**) that 'what is taught is what is learnt'. Yet, as Hatano points out in his third revising assumption, the learner in a 'vertical interaction' may not, for several reasons, be highly motivated to construct knowledge. The fourth revising assumption concerning 'coherence' in learning across different sources of information is not capitalised upon by the Literacy Hour format, which places the teacher at the centre of most of the activities. It is thus during the independent and group work segments of the Literacy Hour, in which most children will be working independently of the teacher, that evidence of children using mediational means to assist their learning is likely to occur.

6.2.3 Children's interactions with peers

Rogoff (1990) also broadens the concept of the zone of proximal development. She employs the metaphor of 'apprenticeship' to describe how children's cognitive development occurs through 'guided participation' in social activity with companions who support and stretch children's understanding of and skills in using the tools of culture. She extends the concept of the ZPD by stressing the interrelatedness of the roles of children and their caregivers and other companions and the importance of tacit and distal as well as explicit face-to-face social interaction in guided participation. 'Guided participation' parallels the concept of 'scaffolding', involving building bridges from children's present understanding and skills to reach new levels of these, and arranging and structuring children's participation in activities, with dynamic shifts over

development in children's responsibilities. Rogoff, too, refers to the concept of 'intersubjectivity', which underlies the processes of guided participation – a sharing of focus and purpose between children and their more skilled partners and their challenging and exploring peers.

Rogoff's elaboration, while consistent with a Vygotskyan approach, provides more focus on the role of children as active participants in their own development. In addition to adult-child interactions, Rogoff also considers those between children and their peers, which, she says, may offer unique possibilities for discussion and collaboration when they consider each other's perspectives in a balanced fashion. She also observes that peers serve as highly available and active companions, providing each other with motivation, imagination, and opportunities for creative elaboration of the activities of their community. Peer interaction, she says, may be especially important in its encouragement of children's exploration without immediate goals – as in play or 'curious fooling around'.

6.2.4 EAL learners

Research into the needs of children who are learning English as an additional language has embraced a similar theoretical base to inform practice as that discussed in the above sections. Cummins has long argued against a transmission model of teaching for young EAL learners – which 'contravenes what we know about how language and thinking skills are acquired by young children ...the passive and dependent role assigned to the child...inhibits the intrinsic motivation and active involvement in learning that are essential for the development of higher-order cognitive and academic skills' (1984). Cummins looks to the work of Piaget, stressing action on the environment as the crucial process in the development of cognitive operations, and Vygotsky's emphasis upon social interaction as the matrix within which higher level thought processes develop – as well as to other theorists who have investigated first language development at home and school (Barnes, 1976; Donaldson, 1978; and Wells, 1982, for example). He recommends:

> *Reciprocal interaction between adults and children [in which] learning objectives tend to be focused on process rather than content, and higher levels of active cognitive processing (e.g. analysing, synthesizing, evaluating) are emphasized to a greater extent than factual recall. Children are actively involved in using*

> *language to learn and to amplify their own experience rather than learning language in isolation from experience. The interactional environment is structured to facilitate children becoming intrinsically involved and personally committed to completion of challenging academic activities.*
>
> (1984:230)

Cummins goes on to consider the extent to which research on second language acquisition is consistent with this perspective and shows that:

> *The basic points emphasized ...are similar...namely, proficiency is developed as a result of interaction that is embedded in a supportive context that supplies the cues necessary to make the language input comprehensible. Among the important aspects of this interaction are the previous experiences stored in the learner's head in the form of cognitive schemata that allow the input to be interpreted...and the modifications made by proficient language users of the target language to facilitate comprehension.*
>
> (*ibid* p 232)

More recently (2000), Cummins has argued for a 'transformative pedagogy' in which knowledge is seen as fluid and not fixed, collaboratively constructed rather than memorised, where the sharing of experience affirms students' identity – and in which a 'critical' approach to enquiry is taken.

EAL learners and mainstream school

Research points to the very different time periods required for pupils to attain peer-level in English conversational skills compared to academic language skills (Collier, 1987; Cummins, 1981.) Allowing for individual differences, the former approach native-like levels within about 2 years of exposure to English, whereas the latter require 5-7 years of school exposure.

Thus, while many EAL learners at Key Stage 1 will have been born in the U.K. and have gained English conversational skills by the time they reach statutory school age (through interactions at nursery or with older siblings and peers, for example), their *apparent* facility with English may mask problems in accessing more formal abstract language that becomes increasingly important. This has implications for the Literacy Hour with its emphasis on whole-class and group teaching. Cummins writes that teachers in the mainstream will be required to address the learning needs of second language pupils by 'individualizing their instruction' to take account of the differing needs of these pupils.

What form, then, will such provision take within these large group Literacy Hour sessions?

6.2.5 Classroom-based research into talk during the Literacy Hour

This section looks at reports of two studies, published since the present project started, which give particular attention to the topic of teacher-pupil talk during the Literacy Hour. The studies – by Mroz, Smith and Hardman (2000) and English, Hargreaves and Hilsam (2002) – considered the concept of 'interactive teaching' espoused by the NLS and examined how this was being implemented at classroom level.

Mroz, Smith & Hardman (2000) – 'The Discourse of the Literacy Hour',

Mroz *et al* observe that the emphasis placed upon 'interactive teaching' by the NLS has been traced by Beard (1999) to the work of Reynolds & Farrell (1996), which linked high quantities of whole class instruction to academic success. Reynolds (1998) characterises such teaching as encompassing rapid question and answer sessions, when teachers are finding out what pupils know, followed by 'teacher-led discussion' involving slower paced, 'higher order' questioning designed to promote higher levels of pupil thinking (cited in Mroz *et al*, 2000). Mroz and colleagues observe, however, that studies of classroom discourse reveal whole class teaching as being dominated by the 'recitation script' – a teacher 'initiation' (usually a question) followed by a student 'response', and then a 'follow-up' by the teacher – very often in the form of an evaluation on the pupil's response. Recitation questioning, therefore, seeks predictable, correct answers and only rarely are teachers' questions used to assist pupils to more complete or elaborated ideas.

With the absence of empirical evidence showing that interactive whole class teaching is distinctive from more traditional styles, Mroz *et al* sought to investigate whether Literacy Hour discourse was promoting 'higher order questioning' and 'teacher-led discussion' as suggested by Reynolds or, as Galton *et al* (1999) suggest, pressurising primary teachers into doing more of what they do already: teacher-led recitation. Their research, examining the discourse patterns of 10 teachers who had been identified by the LEA NLS co-ordinator as effective teachers of the Literacy Hour, found that the three-part exchange structure (described above) was ubiquitous in all 10 lessons. Teacher-directed question and answer and teacher-presentation (informing statements to pupils) accounted for 82%

of the total teaching exchanges. There was a 'notable absence of the higher order questioning and teacher-led discussion which is said to characterise interactive whole class teaching so as to allow pupils to develop more complete or elaborated ideas' (p 386). In each session, the teacher was seen to be predominantly retaining control over the direction and pace of the lesson and the lines of knowledge to be pursued. This resulted in pupils being largely denied access to initiation and evaluation moves, and thus there were very low levels of questions and statements made by pupils themselves. The amount of responsibility pupils were able to take for their own learning was, therefore, minimised, since they were usually dependent on the teacher's 'sense of relevance'.

The research thus found a strong tendency to preserve more traditional patterns of whole class teaching 'despite the appearance of organisational and curriculum change within the Literacy Hour'. Mroz and *et al* point out that such an emphasis on directive forms of teaching goes against the 'widely accepted' social constructivist view of learning suggesting that classroom discourse is not effective unless pupils play an active part in their learning. They then provide a review of research into practical alternatives (outlined in the paragraph below).

Barnes & Todd (1995) suggest that for classroom discourse to be more effective in developing the pupil's own cognitive framework, pupils themselves need to be 'working on understanding' and assuming greater control over their own learning by initiating ideas and responses. Nyastrand & Gamoran (1991), looking at this in relation to how teachers evaluate pupil responses, suggest more 'high-level evaluation'- or 'uptake' – whereby teachers incorporate pupils' answers into subsequent questions. The teacher thereby ratifies the importance of the pupil's response, allowing it to modify or affect the course of the discussion – which itself gradually takes on a conversation-like quality encouraging further pupil-initiated ideas and responses and consequently promoting higher order thinking. Dillon (1994) and Wood (1992) suggest alternative discourse strategies of 'low control' moves by teachers in order to encourage pupils to take the initiative. These involve teachers giving their own thought and ideas in the form of statements in which they speculate, surmise, interpret, illustrate or simply listen and acknowledge what pupils have to say. Again, the purpose is to free pupils to give their

own views, reveal their knowledge and areas of uncertainty and to seek information and explanation through questions of their own. Once pupils have helped to thus 'shape the verbal agenda', teacher questioning is more likely to involve a genuine attempt to explore pupil knowledge and promote 'real' discussion through exploration of a topic with an interchange of ideas and questioning by pupils, and pupils and teacher following up on each other's statements. Such an approach, observe Mroz *et al*, is also said to form a middle ground mix of teacher-guided but not teacher-dominated pedagogy advocated by Mercer (1992).

In addition to classroom strategies, Mroz and colleagues make recommendations regarding in-service training for teachers. They point to research showing that, in the face of a new curriculum or innovation, teachers do not readily change their methods; rather, there is a process of adaptation that tends to leave old teaching styles and patterns of interaction largely untouched. In order to address this problem, they suggest that monitoring and self-evaluation need to become a regular part of in-service training, thereby giving teachers a degree of ownership of the process of school improvement.

Finally, the authors raise the issue of how to identify and measure the 'quality' of classroom talk in which there is a high level of interaction and cognitive engagement by pupils. If interactive whole class teaching is to be developed, criteria addressing the cognitive as well as the interactive dimension of classroom talk will also need to be developed. Such criteria should characterise different kinds of teacher-involved discourse and be related to an explicit evidential base. Their research, conclude Mroz and colleagues, suggests that 'quality' in classroom discourse may be measured by the way in which it resembles discussion – with the notion of reciprocity seen as a common criterion for interactive whole class teaching where teachers interweave pupil initiations into the topics so as to promote thematic coherence and higher order thinking.

<u>English, Hargreaves & Hislam (2002) 'Pedagogical Dilemmas in the National Literacy Strategy: primary teachers' perceptions, reflections and classroom behaviour',</u>

Also researching the concept of 'interactive teaching' as practised during Literacy Hours, the study by English *et al* reported in the above paper focused upon teachers' responses to 'the apparently conflicting pedagogical advice in the NLS'. They noted contradictions

(see also present study, section **4.2.3**) within the *Framework* between the advice, on the one hand, to encourage and extend pupils' contributions – and on the other, to keep up a 'sense of urgency, driven by the need to make progress and succeed'. English and colleagues also examined the 'NLS fliers' produced by the DfEE describing teaching strategies. These were likewise viewed as containing contradictions in their exhortation to teachers to encourage children's contributions – but on condition that this did not interfere with the achievement of short-term learning objectives. Videos demonstrating NLS practice, produced for teachers by OFSTED, placed a 'strong emphasis on *instruction with* intensive teacher-pupil interaction', and provided vivid models of literacy teaching comprising rapid, intensive question-answer sessions. English *et al* argue that these widely viewed videos are likely to have had a considerable impact upon teachers' practice.[2]

Their own study investigated the realisation, in teachers' views and practice, of these NLS directives, and it also built upon the findings of related research. In agreement with Mroz *et al* (*op cit*), that teachers need some degree of ownership of the professional development process, part of their research attempted to implement monitoring and self-evaluation procedures whereby this might be effected. This was achieved by combining the use of video and critical reflection on practice into the process of 'video-stimulated reflective dialogue' (VSRD) using methods which put teachers themselves in charge of the reflective process. The research also comprised semi-structured interviews and systematic observations of teachers' interactions with pupils. The research, conducted at both Key Stages 1 and 2, was carried out in schools that had been either recommended by local inspectors, or were working in initial teacher training or in continuing professional development partnership with their local university.

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[2] Dadds (1999) has similarly criticised the DfEE training videos, many of the extracts of which show '...the dominance of preset objectives determining an unresponsive, convergent teaching style, which is dependent upon singular "right" answers to teacher questions. In pursuing preset purposes, we see few good examples of teachers accepting and exploring children's divergent responses or trying to make sense of children's "wrong" answers. Nor are any teachers persuaded from their preset paths. If persistent convergent teaching in the pursuit of predetermined objectives is to be the new norm in the literacy hour, there may be negative consequences for many children, especially those experiencing difficulties. The 'language gap' (Hull, 1985) between teacher and taught will, inevitably, widen as the pressures of time and pace cause teachers to gloss over the struggles of some children to create their own meaning, especially in whole class sessions.'

Interviews with teachers suggested that over half of them perceived potential conflicts within the NLS documents and were confused by the demands upon them. Observational data indicated that the effects of the NLS on practice in interactive teaching have been to increase the rate of pupil contributions but reduce the opportunities for extended interactions:

> *Achievement of the first of the NLS five characteristics of successful teaching, namely that it is 'characterised by high quality oral work'...seems unlikely to be fulfilled as long as nine out of ten pupil contributions are of less than three words.'*
>
> (p 24)

The observational data, while not assessing learning outcomes, suggested that KS1 teachers tended to use higher levels of low cognitive interactions, fewer challenging questions and had fewer sustained interactions. The findings thus suggest that 'if teachers are to modify their practice in order to encourage higher order thinking, they need unambiguous guidelines or the opportunity to identify and work through the contradictions between official advice and their own educational principles' (p 24). The authors, in agreement with Mroz (*op cit*), thus conclude that teachers need some degree of ownership of the professional development process; the implementation of VSRD, which allowed some teachers in their project to identify confusions and refine their understanding and use of interactive teaching, is suggested as one way in which effective, reciprocal interactive teaching might be achieved.

Discussion: the present study

The exploratory stage of the research, taking place during the first two years of NLS implementation, raised similar issues to those in the above two studies regarding the nature of teacher-pupil talk and the positioning of teachers as professionals within the NLS framework. The research published in the two papers focused mainly upon the *form* of the interactions, rather than considering the content of these in connection with particular areas of the literacy curriculum. Phase Two of the present study extends the examination of 'interactive teaching' in the Literacy Hour by identifying and linking particular teacher-discourse styles to the development of reading, and considering these in terms of the needs of pupils in multiethnic classes.

Some researchers have suggested that the short IRF exchange need not be dismissed outright, but that it may have a positive role to play in certain circumstances (see section **7.1.1** in the following chapter). The findings of the present study, as outlined in the following chapters would add support to this view. On a wider (but related) note, the work of Gregory (1996) researching home-school reading practices of emergent bilingual learners underlines the ways in which varied cultural practices can produce very different concepts and expectations of teaching and learning – which can provide a challenge to established theories and ideas and has implications for a social constructivist view of development. This is discussed further in section **6.3.5.1.**

6.3 Literacy: reading development

Models of school literacy practices vary greatly in their interpretation of how reading should be developed in classrooms and of the relative positioning of teachers and pupils. The approach which might be regarded as reflecting most closely a social constructivist view is that of the 'New Literacy' (Willinsky, 1990). Willinsky's term stems from a number of innovations in the teaching and learning of literacy that he considers to collectively constitute a significant educational movement. In the following subsection I sketch the influences upon this approach, placing it within an outline of the other standard models of reading.

6.3.1 Models of reading

'Standard' models of reading are often characterised according to whether they focus on the features of the text or, alternatively, on features bought *to* the text by the reader in the form of language and experience. Those in the former category – characterised as 'bottom-up' approaches – are concerned with identifying the significant units on the page which readers attend to and analyse in order to decode the message, and derive from experimental work by researchers concerned with the nature of the perception, analysis, storage and retrieval of linguistic information (Webster *et al* 1996). Pupils taught by such methods begin at the 'bottom' or smallest units by learning letter-sound correspondence and move 'up' using this knowledge to read words, sentences and texts. Thus 'bottom-up' approaches feature reading lessons that exercise the specific skills which will eventually add up to effective reading – and are a mechanical conception of

learning insofar as they assume that when all the right parts are in place, the machine will run (Willinsky, 1990).

The contrasting 'top down' models, associated with the psycholinguistic approach of Smith (1978) and the 'whole language' approach of Goodman (1972), 'suggest that reading is guided by decisions which draw on the structure of stories and other text genres and [the reader's] general knowledge of the world' (Webster *et al* 1996:12). Using this knowledge, the novice reader proceeds to work *down* from the general level of expectation to a reading of individual words with increasing accuracy – based primarily on expectation of what would follow in the story and sentences. Rather than decoding words letter by letter, there is a 'guessing game' guided by clues from story, sentence and letters. Reading thus grows out of what the child already knows (Willinsky *op cit*).

The expression of these differing models in classroom practice is associated – for 'bottom-up' approaches – with the use of reading scheme books, especially designed to support the practice and progressive acquisition of particular vocabulary. The 'whole language' and 'real books' approaches associated with 'top-down' theories, on the other hand, make use of books and stories written for children rather than for reading programmes *per se*, and include those by recognised children's authors and the use of enlarged text versions and accompanying smaller versions which groups of children or the whole class can read together and also individually.

6.3.2 The 'New Literacy' account of reading

Willinsky's description of this approach reveals it as sharing features with 'top down' models of reading. In common with psycholinguistic approaches it foregrounds the importance of 'schemata' – the network of ideas that an individual will have associated around a certain concept and which will be brought into play during reading. For the New Literacy this prior knowledge is significant in a doubly facetted manner; in addition to Smith's psycholinguistic account of learning, Willinsky also quotes Paulo Friere:

> *Reading does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather, it is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world...reading the word is not preceded merely by reading the world, but by a certain form of writing or rewriting it, that is, of transforming it by means of conscious, practical work.*
>
> (Freire and Donaldo, 1987:29;35)

Freire's work is a model for the New Literacy in resetting the educational agenda for a reading that comes from the student and takes up reading as a cultural enterprise that can work with or against the life of the student and the community. This interactive model resonates with Vygotsky's (1962) work on the integral role of social engagement and dialogue in learning but with a critical edge to the emerging understanding of literacy.

Thus, writes Willinsky, the New Literacy proposes an alternative sense of reading which rests on two principal dimensions of meaning: that rooted in students' experiences of text and that which is set within the sociability of the classroom setting. Under such a disposition toward reading, the classroom takes on a different atmosphere; literacy is something to share and language for connecting with others, all in the amplification of meaning:

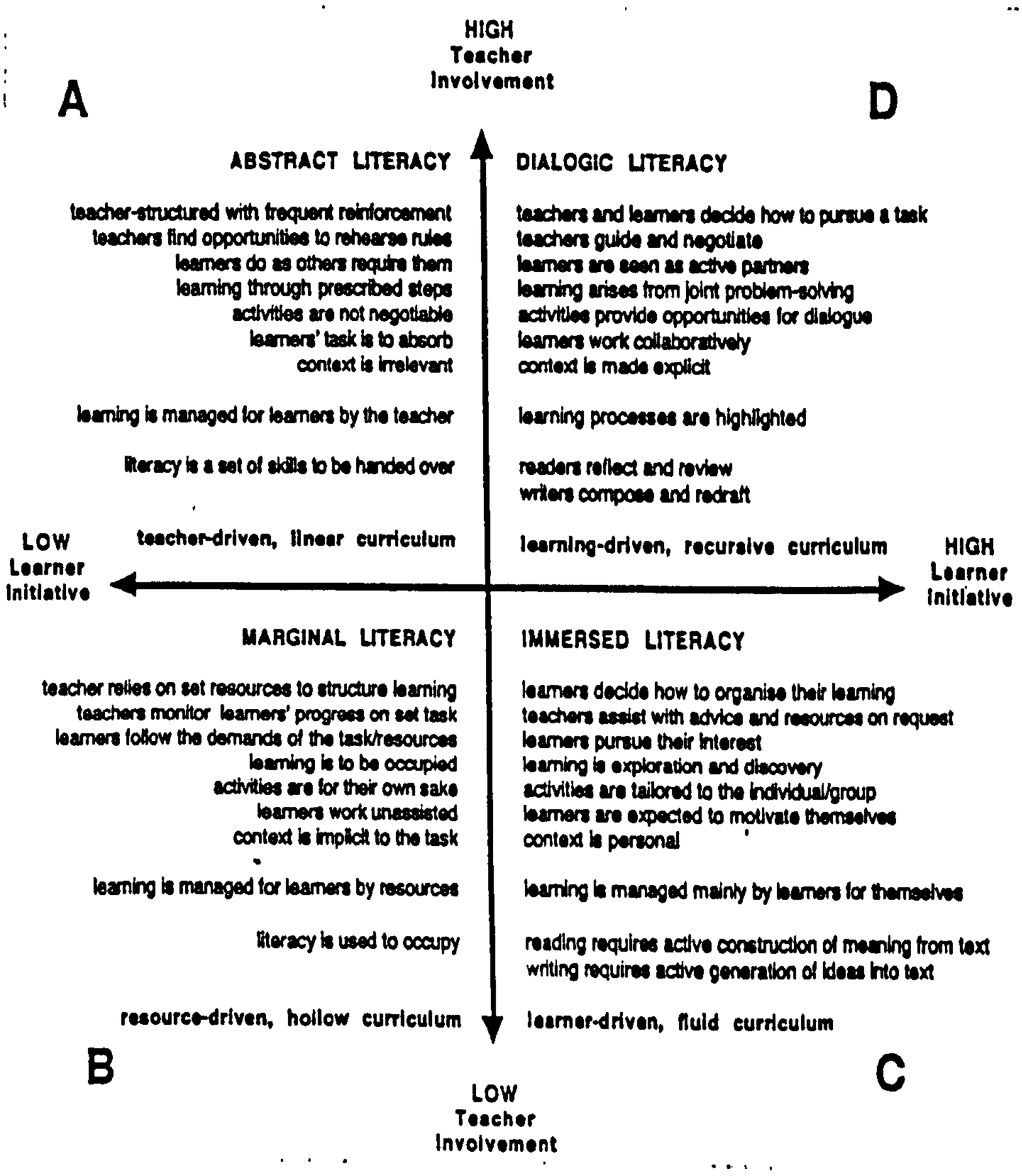
> *The New Literacy is about restructuring the life of literacy in the classroom and the nature of the work which teachers and students do together. The reading lesson...is clearly about extending and enriching the social, intellectual, and aesthetic exchange which literacy affords with texts and language.*
>
> (Willinsky, 1990:81)

The shift in thinking associated with the New Literacy involves students taking increasing control over the texts they use or construct; the work in the classroom recognising the importance of using text effectively in different subject areas, starting from the students' own awareness and experience; and, most important, the relationship between teacher and pupil changing from that of handing over information to one of working together to extend the pupil's range of meaning-gaining and meaning-making.

6.3.3. A framework for literacy teaching and learning

The varying conceptions of literacy learning and accompanying teaching practices inherent in the wide variety of approaches that have arisen to develop reading have been captured and accounted for within the framework constructed by Reed *et al* (1996) and reproduced on the following page.

***Figure 6.1** Framework of teacher-learner proximation: literacy learning through interaction*



Seeking to construct new perspectives on interactions between teachers and learners, the framework may be regarded as helpful in exploring the innovation of the National Literacy Strategy, which lays a particular emphasis upon developing literacy through interactive teaching.

Employing Vygotsky's paradigm of 'scaffolded' learning as a means through which to investigate adult-child proximation, the authors 'map' the multiple interactions apparent in the complex contexts and situations of classrooms. These are represented in the

framework, which identifies predominant kinds of teaching and learning styles, how they overlap or emerge and the possible consequences for pupils' experience of literacy. It also indicates a teacher's sense of direction, emphasis or orientation.

Literacy teaching is defined as concerning the making of meaning between teacher, learner and text – and thus the degree of involvement of the teacher in the process of meaning-making, or mediation, is a useful indicator of the quality of interaction being offered to the learner. This is represented by the vertical axis of the framework. *Literacy learning* is represented by the horizontal axis illustrating the degree to which the learner is involved, or permitted to become involved, in the mediation of meaning through interaction – the quality of a learner's initiative indicating the degree of involvement. Thus the two continua indicate, on the vertical axis, the level of management, control and mediation exercised by the teacher and, on the horizontal axis, the degree of initiative, engagement and active involvement of the pupil. Taken together, they describe the nature of interactions between teacher and pupil.

'Bottom-up' approaches to literacy

Quadrant A, characterised by high teacher management and didactic teaching style with little pupil initiative, may be seen as reflecting a 'bottom-up' approach to reading – a linear passage based upon controlled exposure to 'sight vocabulary' or phonic rules taught separately from context. Assessment is likely to be based upon the attainment of skill criteria or teaching objectives set by the teacher. Meanings are thus managed and presented separately and out of textual or social context, thus mapping 'Abstract Literacy'.

'Top-down' approaches to literacy

The 'top-down' approach to literacy may be viewed as situated on the right hand side of the framework, featuring high learner-initiative – and will approximate more towards either a 'Dialogic Literacy' or an 'Immersed Literacy' depending upon level of teacher involvement. Reed and colleagues describe Quadrant C as including a defining of literacy in terms of immersion of pupils in books as sources of enjoyment and information, and an assumption (perhaps) that children will read when they are ready.

Assessment is concerned almost exclusively with the qualities of the child's unique production or performance.

A 'Dialogic' approach to literacy

Quadrant D, ascribing active roles to both teachers and learners, most closely equates with the social constructivist view of learning – which is facilitated, but not controlled by the adult. Learning is viewed as a complex process, more than just the sum of a number of small sub-skills; the smaller units of a task are seen as more readily acquired within the context of a meaningful whole. Literacy takes the form of a dialogue in the making, pupils collaborating with adults and other partners to construct writing or interrogate a text, draw inferences, analyse or evaluate their own and other peoples' written material. Tasks are contextualised in the sense that teachers share meaning and purpose with pupils in defined settings and questions are often process-orientated or speculative 'What if?' or 'How?'. Assessment is reflective and formative, reviewing how tasks were tackled and identifying key issues for the next teaching steps. Concerned with teacher-sensitivity to the needs of learners, how learning takes place and the requirements of the task, the quality of literacy that arises in Quadrant D is termed 'dialogic' in recognition of Bakhtinian and Vygotskyan perceptions of language and learning in immediate sociocultural contexts.

The framework is further discussed in Chapter 10 in relation to findings reported from Phase 2 of the present research (section **10.3.1**) – in which the nature of teacher-pupil interactions and their potential for learning is the focus.

6.3.4 Developing literacy with EAL learners

This section discusses EAL literacy learning in some detail, including classroom strategies for literacy development not addressed in the previous sections on mainstream literacy. In keeping with the 'inclusive' theme of this thesis, in which general strategies of 'good practice' for literacy development are viewed as common for both EAL learners and native English speakers, the strategies outlined here cover the broad needs of *all* learners in the multiethnic classroom.

Those concerned with the education of EAL learners have taken a similar view to those outlined in the previous section. Hudelson (1994), quoting the work of Freire, Wells and Goodman, writes of literacy that goes beyond that defined as a set of skills (literacy as performance) to literacy as having the potential to open up new ways of viewing the world and transforming it. This view she applies to both native speakers of English and learners for whom English is not their native language. 'Meaning' or 'the construction of meaning' must be 'at the core' of a definition of 'literacy'. Reading is 'a language process' in which an individual constructs meaning through a transaction with written text; the transaction involves the reader's acting upon or interpreting the text, and the interpretation is influenced by the reader's past experiences, language background, and cultural framework, as well as his or her purpose in reading. For teachers of second language learners, Hudelson argues that it is 'absolutely imperative' for them to be concerned, above all, with meaning rather than form.

Hudelson quotes a number of studies of both native speakers and bilingual learners, the findings of which emphasise the child's active role in coming to understand and use written language. However, she goes on, literacy acquisition, like oral acquisition is also a profoundly social phenomenon. She quotes Smith (1988) in emphasising that children make sense of print when they encounter it as an integral part of interesting and important life activities in which they are engaged with others. This may be having a hamburger or purchasing food, for example Storybook reading necessarily involves the interaction of a more fluent reader with a less fluent one and it is through a more proficient reader's demonstration of the literate behaviour of reading, including the work of predicting or anticipating and inferencing, that beginning readers start to construct a text for themselves. (Here, then, are parallels with the Shared Text Work segments of the Literacy Hour, the purpose of which is the *modelling* of reading strategies by the more fluent teacher to the less fluent pupils.) And because more proficient readers respond to the apprentice reader's meaning-making by encouraging these constructions, children continue to experiment. Through interaction, children begin to understand the structures of narratives and the processes involved in constructing meaning. Adults respond to the child's continuing to work at literacy and eventually using printed materials independently. Additionally, as children see adults read varied materials for varied purposes, they begin to construct a schema of purposes for reading.

Peer Tutoring. Hudelson also illustrates how children can play an important role in each other's literacy development, whether in a first or a second language, and in both formal and informal contexts. She notes how pairs or small groups of children assist each other in the construction of meaning as they read and reread both familiar and unfamiliar stories.

Research in the UK has also shown how children's literacy development may be enhanced by their peers. Gregory and Williams (2000) demonstrate how bilingual children learn from siblings (this was also mentioned by parents of EAL learners in the present study, section **3.3**), while more recently, Kenner (2002) researching children's biliteracy in mainstream and 'Saturday' schools, illustrates six year olds in mainstream classes being introduced to different writing systems, taught by their bilingual peers. Such practices enhance understanding about the way in which language works, having both cognitive and cultural benefits for all the children concerned, she suggests.

6.3.4.1 Classroom strategies

Hudelson gives specific suggestions for implementing her ideas in classrooms with significant numbers of second language learners. The recommendations are reported in some detail since they contain features in common with the Literacy Hour activities (for mainstream teaching) laid out in the NLS documents. Pertinent to the present study, Hudelson suggests the following.

Reading development

In common with Gibbons (1991) – discussed in section **4.3.1** – Hudelson's recommended strategies for promoting reading with EAL learners include utilising predictable books which allow familiarity to be built up – sharing these with repeat readings with children and making them available for children to read themselves. Learners thus see reading as a process of predicting their way through text, simultaneously utilising semantic, syntactic and graphophonic systems of language. 'Big books' used in such ways enable groups of children to see text more easily and enable teachers to direct children's attention to particular features of text (Holdaway, 1979). Recommended activities include:

- predicting content of text from pictures;
- in successive readings, tracking print with a pointer and encouraging children to join in;
- stopping at predictable parts of the story and asking learners to fill in the next word or phrase (accepting, for meaning, alternatives to those in print);
- covering up a word, leaving only the initial letter/s to encourage graphophonic as well as syntactic and semantic cues to predict;
- reading ahead to use context that follows as well as context that precedes the missing word or phrase;
- focusing learners' attention on certain text features such as repeated words; words that begin with a specific letter or cluster of letters; punctuation marks; capital letters etc.;
- using these books to act out stories and to create their own or group versions of the books.

These suggestions, then, include activities requiring children to use their existing understanding to make meaning while interacting with the text and encourage them to look for patterns in the print. What is crucial, according to Hudelson,

> *...is that the emphasis go from the whole down to the part rather than vice versa. Learning always begins with the experience of the whole story. Then, if the learners need specific instruction or focus on the parts, the teacher may use the text selectively to assist children in becoming independent, effective readers.*
> (p 145)

Reading aloud

Hudelson underlines the importance of frequent reading aloud to both native speakers and second language learners, thus demonstrating the power of written stories and encouraging an awareness of narrative structure and literary language. Children need to hear fluent models of English reading:

> *They need to be read to from varied genres in order to hear and enjoy the richness and variety of the English language, begin to develop knowledge of the literary and story heritage of varied cultures, and begin to see literature as one way of coming to understand the world and the relationship of the individual to that world.*
> (p 145)

Books should include those with multiethnic perspectives, including those of the learners, and also those representing specific traditions or stories of varied cultural groups as well as information books containing topics of interest to children. Other features to bear in

mind concerning the special linguistic needs of young second language learners in constructing meaning from texts include clear illustrations, and linked to these, a predictable printed text.

Literature response

Following reading aloud to children, opportunities for them to respond to what they have heard should be made – to allow them to construct meaning and to relate the story to their own lives and to comment on emotions and ideas evoked by the story. These comments can be shared with other learners. Hudelson emphasises that this should not entail bombarding learners with a variety of comprehension questions but rather give them time to reflect on the literacy experience they have had, or respond to more general questions such as 'what would you like to say about this book/chapter/poem?

Self-selected reading

In order to see themselves as readers and to view reading as enjoyable, children should choose some of their own reading material and read it in school hours. In many classrooms this activity is highlighted as a designated activity in its own right – everyone reading at the same time.

Encouraging collaborative learning

The classroom is viewed as a 'workshop' in which learners work together collaboratively, being encouraged to learn from each other as well as from the teacher. Children thus see other children as resources and will work together to ask questions, figure out ways to answer their questions and use oral and written language collectively and independently as they are doing so (Hudelson here echoes Moll and Whitmore,1993) It is important to develop a sense of community in which children experience a feeling of belonging, well-being and responsibility for each other; nurturing such an environment, will take time, effort and patience.

Including literacy development as part of content development

Like Freire(1987) and Cummins (2000), Hudelson urges that learners use oral and written language to learn about the world and to act in some way to transform it – the most effective environment for language (including literacy) learning being one in which

language is used to study content that is of interest and concern to pupils. This has been put into practice by educators via teaching based on topics or themes – in which learners work collaboratively, using both oral and written language to learn about the topic and to investigate and answer questions that they have generated. Thus they are active and involved in their learning. The strategies that she has recommended, contends Hudelson, reflect what is known today about children's language and literacy development for both first and second language learners, and they are developmentally appropriate in terms of what is 'cognitively sensible'.

Her broad recommendations echo those of Cummins (1984), who, reviewing the work of Smith (1978), Goodman and Goodman (1978) and Holdaway (1979) argued that within the psycholinguistic model, the emphasis upon readers as active meaning-generators 'is considerably more congruent with language acquisition research and theory than is emphasis on rote learning of discrete non-meaningful rules implied by an extreme phonics approach' (1984:234). Phonics-based bottom-up approaches tend to confuse children about the nature and functions of reading, he asserts. Cummins thus argues against the 'potentially negative' consequences of transmission models of reading, proposing as with other communicative uses of language 'genuine reading' (as opposed to 'word calling') involving the sharing of meaningful experiences:

> *Classroom or home environments that provide ample opportunities for explorations into print in the context of reciprocal interaction between adults and children foster what Holdaway (1979) has called a "literacy set", i.e. strong motivation and efficient linguistic and cognitive strategies for exploring print.*
> (p 234)

More specifically, Cummins also advocates shared-book experiences such as those described by Holdaway (1979) using enlarged texts (as described by Hudelson) and own-made versions which can be adapted to reflect children's own culturally diverse backgrounds, 'as part of a collaborative approach to literacy instruction which emphasizes active intrinsically-motivated participation by the children' (1984:235).

Other researchers into second language acquisition likewise emphasise the active meaning-making process of reading. Gibbons (1991), adopting Goodman's (1967) model

of reading outlines the features of the cueing systems by which a fluent reader predicts what he or she is about to read – by using a combination of semantic, syntactic and graphophonic cues employed in the activity of reading. This prediction is then confirmed or rejected on the basis of what follows. Rather than seeing reading as 'top down' or 'bottom up', however, Gibbons contends that it is more useful to see it as a complex process where processing at one level (e.g. word perception) interacts with processing at another level (such as semantic knowledge). While effective readers use cueing systems flexibly, beginning readers tend to rely more heavily on one or another system. Teachers, she says, can only respond to what children are trying to do, build on their existing strategies and help them to develop other strategies that they do not yet have.

Young second language readers, points out Gibbons, are usually *developing* readers with gaps in their cultural and linguistic knowledge. A key feature in teaching strategies is the notion of 'extending the context' – i.e. broadening the range and knowledge of the cueing systems themselves. Gibbons' detailed recommendations for this are similar to those of Cummins and Hudelson, utilising shared book activities to engage children imaginatively, personally and linguistically with the texts.

Gregory (1996) also sets reading for young EAL learners within a Vygotskyan framework, stressing the powerful link between social and cognitive aspects of learning, and proposing an 'interactive' model of reading, in which children draw upon different cues to help them read. Gregory's work, however, emphasises the *particular* strengths and weaknesses that emergent bilinguals may have in this respect and the importance of the teacher's sensitivity to these as she scaffolds children's learning. These linguistic strengths and weaknesses may be very different from those of children's monolingual peers; for example they may make particular use of graphophonic cues and less use of semantic cues in early reading experiences.

Gregory, with Williams (2000), illustrates how outside-school reading practices can portray different accounts of what it means to 'read' to those inside school. Reading for most Bangladeshi-British mothers, for example, 'means simply "reading the Qur,an"' (p 179) – and the Qur,anic classes attended by children after school emphasise the recitation and learning of complex phonic rules. Thus children may be in a position to capitalise on

these cues when they come to reading in English. The semantic cues emphasised in mainstream school, however, may not be highlighted in these children's out of school reading experience.

Gregory's work also illustrates how older children may 'broker' new language and literacy for their younger siblings in home work that links state and community practices – practices that are echoed in the NLS. The NLS, observe Gregory and Williams (*op cit*) has been successful in increasing teachers' awareness of their children's strengths in terms of vocabulary learning, spelling, phonics and grammar work. In defying notions of cognitive deficit that previously may have prevailed, the Strategy could be hailed as a success. However, they conclude, it remains to be seen:

> *whether or how these undoubted strengths can be built upon to increase comprehension, a love of English literature and an ability to relate school literacy to their own lives.*
>
> (p 204)

Such considerations as raised by Gregory and Williams, then, illustrate tensions for teachers in multiethnic classrooms, attempting to link their teaching practice to children's established understanding.

6.3.5 Interpreting 'Literacy' - classroom-based research and the Literacy Hour

This section considers the development of reading at 'text level' (NLS) – when children might be expected to be engaging actively with deeper meanings and 'messages' within the text as a whole. The exploratory Phase One stage of the study noted a fragmentation of reading, with little sustained reading of texts in their entirety and frequent pauses to question pupils – a practice which might hinder understanding of wider issues in the text as a whole, and the development of children's responses to these. There were few observed instances of children and teachers considering these more general themes in the books they read during Shared and Guided Reading sessions.

Published responses to 'literacy' as conceived by the NLS documents have been touched upon in Part 1 of the Literature Review (Chapter 2) – with criticisms of the model centring around its disregard for what Hilton terms the child's 'domestic curriculum' and

the reducing of literacy to a set of skills to be delivered through pre-packaged materials.

Dombey (1998) also complained that:

> *...the work with 'rich and varied' texts set out in the Framework offers children little opportunity to experience these in any rich or varied sense. Texts are to be treated as geological sites from which words and phrases must be quarried in a laborious process. The emphasis is all on drawing children's conscious attention to the devices by which the writers achieve their effects, rather than ensuring that those effects are achieved, much less on taking any account of reader response theory by recognising the unique nature of each reader's response to a text.*
>
> (p 39)

Dadds (1999), too, echoed this concern, observing that the notion of 'text level' work within the Literacy Hour does not appear to refer predominantly to genuine literary engagement with whole texts but rather to linguistic textual analysis in order to understand how texts are constructed (p 11).

6.3.5.1 EAL learners

Research by Datta (2000) into 'bilinguality' and literacy in London primary schools found that children were good at understanding as well as writing information text. However,

> *Almost all [teachers] agreed that most bilinguals were fluent readers but failed to engage deeply with text.... Teachers of older bilinguals reported that many could not understand literary language, 'they couldn't read beyond the literal', and this affected their writing as well, in that their reading experiences did not inform their writing.*
>
> (p 9)

There are deep pedagogical implications here, observes Datta, which should not result in replacing good literature with 'simpler texts' or grouping bilinguals in low-ability setting (leading to low self-concept). Instead there should be a strategy to 'energize their involvement with text'.

Supporting bilingual children by extended literacy talk around reading helps them to learn very important lessons about reading and language:

> *They learn to <u>chunk meanings together</u> in their reading discourse, to engage imaginatively and intellectually in exploring '<u>possible worlds</u>' (Bruner, 1986) in actual worlds in text, and in so doing relate it to their own worlds.*
>
> (p 140)

The process of co-creating text', continues Datta, is very essential for bilinguals, who need space and time to decode cultural nuances embedded in text in their second language. Talk helps them to add new meanings to the old and develop the fit by relating life meanings to text and text meanings to life. Teachers who engage in imaginative, collaborative and exploratory talk around text make it possible for young readers to understand the relationship between life, language and literature, and give them the opportunity to listen to, rehearse and develop confidence in the symbolic use of words to make meaning. Datta's recommended strategy features re-readings of selected texts and a shift in emphasis from word-centred meaning to image-centred meaning to understand and construct literary text. The evidence from her study, she says, suggests a strategy of imagination and image-forming allows bilinguals to 'hold the picture in their heads', to think deeply about possibilities of meanings and to listen carefully to verbal constructs and the significance of the image or metaphor in relation to meaning in an episode or text.

While Datta's research was carried out with 10 and 11-year-old children at the top end of the primary school, and included use of texts from 'adult' literature, her recommended strategy has its antecedent in the picture books used to develop reading with younger children. Datta echoes Meek (1988) in her observation of how good picture books can make complex and imaginative literacy demands on children that encourage young readers to 'play the linguistic game' at many levels. The dual narrative mode in words and images helps readers to move fluidly between the literal and visual text to engage in deeper layers of meaning.

> *Reading for young bilinguals is often an interaction between literal text (sometimes including unfamiliar words and syntax), and simultaneous scanning of visual text to endorse or clarify meanings – linguistic, structural or cultural. Meaning is made at personal level. The stories offer layers of meaning to young minds and open up different avenues for talk. All this helps them to read beyond the literal. These images also aid in holding story metaphor in memory, even at the early stages of learning English. Images are not tied to any particular language and thus they enable bilinguals to think freely using both their linguistic worlds. The text becomes alive, accessible and personal and the motivation to read is sustained.*
>
> (p 141)

Further facilitating features of such books include:

> *...repetitive grammatical structures [which] enable younger bilingual readers to play with and memorize some of these meaning structures, and most importantly to create their own. Good books nurture talk and imagination.... Through this talk and text bilingual learners learn how to construct themselves as readers.*
> (p 232)

Datta's study, though not researching the Literacy Hour *per se*, thus touches upon features within it – the texts, often containing repeated elements and with accompanying illustrations (enlarged for Literacy Hour study), the repeat readings of these throughout the Literacy Hour week and the emphasis upon interactive collaborative and exploratory talk around text between teachers and pupils. The focus here, however, is upon the development of a personal response to literature, emphasising an engagement with the text's deeper ideas, rather than mere mastery of the more mechanical, surface features of the written text. Unless this aspect is addressed, suggests Datta, bilingual learners are unlikely to progress towards the cognitive academic language proficiency identified by Cummins as increasingly vital as they progress through school.

6.4 Summary and reflection

This chapter has considered concepts of interactive teacher-pupil talk as the means through which literacy may be developed, and described these in terms of a social constructivist approach to learning. Interactive talk is advocated as a teaching strategy by the NLS, though it remains theoretically unelaborated in the documents. Published research into Literacy Hour discourse, however, has found that in those classrooms observed, teacher-pupil interactions conform to a short teacher-initiated and controlled IRF format, in which teachers seek predictable correct answers that do not develop the pupil's own cognitive framework.

Phase Two of the present study links a consideration of teacher-pupil discourse styles to the curriculum area of reading and the development of this in three Key Stage 1 multiethnic classrooms, thus extending the two previous studies. In a social constructivist view, literacy takes the form of 'dialogue in the making', being concerned (in the development of reading) with the making of meaning between teacher, learner and text. Certain features of the Literacy Hour – the shared reading of the enlarged book and associated development of reading strategies through these texts, and the Guided Reading

sessions – may offer the potential for rich opportunities for communal construction of meaning and facilitate learning for all children in multiethnic classes. Arguably, these sessions have the potential to offer what Datta (2000) describes as:

> *an enabling environment where most learning is collaborative, intercultural and an interactive enterprise, that allows 'continual oscillation' between text and personal meaning-making....*
>
> (p 231)

These are the conditions, she says, that will develop literacy in English strongly.

The chapter has considered two areas of reading development: that concerned with more formal decoding of the printed text, and that of personal response made by the reader to the 'messages' within the text itself. For a social constructivist approach to reading development, what the reader brings to the text in both these activities, and the meanings that are thus negotiated, are a crucial part of the reading process. In this context, the particular features of picture books can play a significant role in development for emergent readers, both first language English speakers and EAL learners.

However, as Gregory and Williams (2000) demonstrate, the particular meanings brought to the activity of reading by children from differing cultural backgrounds – in terms of expectations and prior learning experiences – can also vary greatly in multiethnic school settings. Some children may experience a disjunction between their own understandings of literacy and how it is practised and those practices that they encounter in their mainstream school classroom. There are aspects of the Literacy Hour which – though criticised by some commentators (see Chapter 2) – may nevertheless be more in harmony with these children's established understandings than former school practices, an observation also made by Bourne (2000).

But the dilemma for the teacher, charged with 'delivering' a homogeneous curriculum to the whole class at once, must remain that of attempting to address the learning needs of *all* children. The exploratory phase observations suggested that, within the format of the NLS, this was effected through IRF interactions. It was, however, noted that some studies have viewed the recitation sequence as having a certain value – and a more detailed consideration of this issue forms the subject of Phase Two of the research, introduced in the following chapter.

Chapter 7

Introduction to Phase Two: teacher-pupil talk

7.1 Introduction and aims of Phase Two of the study

This chapter introduces Phase Two of the research project, in which teacher-pupil talk relating to the development of reading during the Literacy Hour was studied. It is followed by two chapters detailing the findings during the Shared Text Work and the Guided Reading segments of the Literacy Hour, and, following on from these, a third chapter which discusses and further develops the findings and their implications. (A section on Focused Word Work is in Appendix 5). Phase Two of the study thus aims to provide a detailed description and analysis of didactic verbal interactions occurring between teacher and pupils in the three classes during the Literacy Hour and to consider ways in which they relate to the particular curriculum area of reading development.

The exploratory phase of the research drew attention to the apparent uniformity of teacher-pupil verbal interactions during Shared and Guided Reading sessions; these were contained within a 'criteria of relevance' imposed by the teacher through (largely) IRF type questioning (section **4.2.2**). From a social constructivist view of development, pupils may thus be regarded as being negatively positioned, since they did not play an active part in their learning. However, it was also noted that not all researchers viewed the IRF exchange in such a poor light and some considered that it could have a positive impact on children's learning. These views are outlined briefly below.

7.1.1 Evaluating the 'IRF' sequence

Wells (1993) observes that Sinclair and Coulthard seem to take an 'agnostic' view, assuming that the triadic dialogue form 'simply *is* the unmarked mode of classroom interaction' adopted by teachers by default unless there is good reason to behave otherwise. They therefore offer no evaluation of its educational effectiveness. While authors such as Wood (1992) have criticised the over-use of questioning by teachers –

particularly closed 'recall' questions – other researchers claim that the IRF mode can have a functional effectiveness.

Mercer (1992), for example, argued that it is justified as an effective means of monitoring children's knowledge and understanding, guiding their learning and marking knowledge and experience which is considered educationally significant or valuable. And Geekie & Raban (1993) suggest that for younger learners, and as a complement to less constrained forms of classroom discourse, such exchanges can at least provide 'predictable lesson structures' permitting 'both teacher and child to give close attention to the academic content of lessons' (p 66). 'More general agreement persists, however, over the limiting effects, from the pupil's point of view, associated with the dominance of types of IRF exchange in which pupil-responses remain brief and adult-framed and in which feedback is realised in evaluative terms' (Westgate and Hughes, 1997:132).

Wells (1993) notes that such differing attitudes towards the use of the triadic dialogue form have been held by researchers who nevertheless all appeal to the principles of socio-cultural theory. One reason for this is to do with the 'somewhat undifferentiated manner in which triadic dialogue has typically been treated, as if all the occasions when it occurs are essentially similar' (p 3). Wells' own view is that it is neither good nor bad – its merits (or demerits) depending upon the purposes it is used to serve on particular occasions and also upon the larger goals by which those purposes are served. He illustrates how, over a unit of study, the third 'move' may be used to check pupils' knowledge or as an opportunity to extend a pupil's answer – drawing out its significance or making connections with other parts of the pupil's total experience during the topic under study. It is, he says, '...in this third step in the co-construction of meaning that the next cycle of the learning-and-teaching spiral has its point of departure' (p 35).

7.1.2 Literacy Hour exchanges

Published research into the Literacy Hour (section **6.2.5**) reports practice that appears to perpetuate the more negative aspects of triadic dialogue. Mroz, Smith & Hardman (2000) found that lessons:

> *were conducted through teacher recitation where interrogations of the pupil's knowledge and understanding was the most common form of classroom interaction.... [The] ubiquity of the three part exchange structure meant that [all lessons] were predominantly conducted within the teacher's frame of reference...pupils rarely managed to impose their own relevance outside the teacher's frame of reference.*
>
> (p 382)

Subsequent research, following their study, suggests that since the introduction of the Literacy Hour teachers have become 'very successful in making their literacy teaching more interactive', with pupil contributions expected and encouraged twice as often as before the NLS. However, sustained interactions lasting uninterrupted with the same child or small group for over 25 seconds had declined: 'only 10% of observations included children's responses of more than three words and only 5% were longer than 10 words' (English, Hargreaves & Hislam, 2002; p 23). These authors' observational data suggested that Key Stage One teachers tended to use higher levels of low cognitive interactions, fewer challenging questions and fewer sustained interactions.

7.1.3 Phase Two: an overview

Phase Two of the present study likewise aims to provide a detailed description and analysis of the didactic verbal interactions occurring between teacher and pupils during the Literacy hour. However, in addition to a study of the *form* that the discourse takes, this is combined with a particular focus upon *content*, in order to describe teaching practices in relation to the curriculum area of Reading – and how this is approached with young developing readers at Key Stage 1. The aim, therefore, is to characterise at micro-level some of the approaches to reading as realised through teacher-pupil verbal interactions and as practised by teachers who are operating under a detailed, prescribed curriculum.

In order to explore these interactions, a portion of the data collected was subjected to a similar analysis as the study by Mroz *et al.* The purpose was two-fold: first, the framework used by the authors would provide a useful 'lens' through which to view the present data in relation to patterns of teacher-pupil interaction; a second aim was to ascertain whether this small-scale study would suggest confirmation of the original study's findings concerning the way teachers were interpreting the NLS directives. In

addition to this coded framework, the recorded transcripts were also subjected to a detailed description and interpretative analysis in order to capture the detail of particular teacher-pupil interactions and enable consideration to be given to their potential for pupil development.

The following sections detail the research questions and the approach to the research in terms of methods used.

7.2 Phase Two research questions

Main research questions:

In what specific ways do these teachers interact with their pupils to develop reading; what patterns of verbal interaction can be identified, and how can these be characterised in terms of potential pupil learning? (RQ 2)

What perspectives on the reading process are modelled in these Literacy Hour teaching practices? (RQ 3)

Focusing research questions:

Do teachers' questions 'probe pupils' understanding' and 'extend their ideas' – as envisaged by the NLS *Framework*? (RQ 2a)

Whose 'frame of reference' is to the fore – teacher, pupils or both?

- do pupils initiate contributions to the discourse?
- are pupils' initiations taken up by the teacher; if so – how are they used?

(RQ 2b)

What teaching and learning practices can be identified within the teacher-pupil discourse; how appropriate are these for EAL learning, and what part do EAL learners themselves play in this discourse? (RQ 2c)

7.3 Research approach

This part of Phase Two of the study proceeded in two stages. First, samples of teacher-pupil talk from the three classes were recorded, transcribed and coded, and a detailed description and analysis made. From these findings, categories of differing types of teacher talk were developed and these then informed the second stage, in which further episodes of teacher-pupil talk relating to the categories were identified. The first stage is reported in Chapters 8 and 9 and Appendix 6, and the second stage in Chapter 10.

7.3.1 The data: scope and rationale for data selection

The data set, as shown in **Table 1.2** (Chapter One, p 12), comprises audio-recordings and accompanying observation notes. These written notes focused upon the activity of the classroom and the demeanour of teachers and pupils – particularly the EAL learners – noting, for example, signs of their engagement during whole-class sessions and periods of teacher talk. The notes also assisted in orientating the recordings towards matching the talk to particular pupils.

The notes and audio-recordings span a period of three complete literacy hour 'weeks' – one for each year group. The Literacy Hour 'weeks' may be regarded as bounded units of study, since work is organised around the study of a single enlarged text, changed weekly. Thus 4 hours of recordings for each class were made (since in this school, the fifth day did not follow the Literacy Hour format but was rather used for extended writing), accompanied by written observation notes. From these recordings, detailed analysis was carried out on selected segments of the Literacy Hours.

For each of the three classes:

First stage:

- The 'Shared Text Work' and 'Focused Word Work' from the first day of the Literacy Hour 'week'.
- One 'Guided Reading' session[1].

Second stage:

- Episodes of teacher-pupil talk from subsequent 'Shared Text Work' and 'Guided Reading' sessions during the same Literacy Hour week.

The remainder of the week's sessions (not included for detailed analysis) provide additional information to supplement the findings of the exploratory study regarding the way in which Shared Text Work sessions were structured, and the possible consequences

[1] There were problems with the recording of two of these Guided Reading sessions – one owing to the interruption of a call to the assembly hall and the other caused by problems with the recording equipment. For this reason, two Guided Reading sessions recorded during Phase One of the study have been substituted for detailed analysis in Chapter 9. Concerned with *examples* of how the Literacy Hour is being interpreted, this does not affect conclusions drawn.

of this for pupils' reading development (see section **10.6**). Data from the recorded Literacy Hour 'weeks' has also been used in the categories of teacher-pupil talk in section **10.3.3**.

In selecting sessions for detailed analysis in Phase Two, the first day of the Literacy Hour 'week' was chosen because, during this session, teachers will be orientating pupils towards the new book and focusing upon the pictures as well as the printed text. There is thus potentially more opportunity for pupil involvement in the form of initiations sparked off by discussion of the illustrations (which are not dependent on ability to read the printed text), and by the stimulus of the new text. The pictures also provide teachers with more open-ended talk options with pupils since understandings are less definite and more open to interpretation. Facilitation of personal responses to the text, then, might be expected to arise particularly at this time.

Focused Word Work sessions were included since they follow directly on from the Shared Text Work, feature activities to support the development of specific word and letter decoding skills, and they often had an initial link (or bridge) at the start of the session with the enlarged text being studied. However, not featuring the activity of 'reading' as such, these sessions are reported as an Appendix (5) to the main text. The groups observed during Guided Reading sessions were selected on the basis that they contained both EAL learners and monolingual speakers.

7.3.2 Analysis

As mentioned above, there were two layers of analysis; these are detailed below.

<u>Discourse analysis framework</u>

Following the research by Mroz and colleagues, which used Sinclair & Coulthard's (1992) system of discourse analysis, the audio-recorded sessions were transcribed and coded into the different categories of 'teaching exchange' – the individual steps by which the lesson progresses. While the descriptive apparatus developed by Sinclair and Coulthard proposes five 'ranks' of lesson analysis (*lesson; transaction; exchange; move; act*), Mroz *et al's* analysis took place at the level of the exchange, which draws on linguistic considerations in describing what is going on. Sinclair and Coulthard identify

11 categories of teaching exchange: *Teacher Inform; Teacher Direct; Teacher Elicit; Pupil Elicit; Pupil Inform; Check; Re-initiation (i); Re-initiation (ii); Listing; Reinforce; Repeat.* After the research by Mroz *et al*, the two categories of 'Re-initiation' were merged in the present study. (See Appendix 7 for elaboration of the categories). The four main functions of classroom exchanges are those of informing, directing, eliciting and checking. The elicit exchange which occurs inside the classroom has a different function from most occurring outside it because the teacher usually knows the answer to the question being asked – and there is thus a 'feedback' move to pupils regarding their answer and whether it is correct. This produces the 'IRF' ('Initiation-Response-Feedback') teaching exchange that has been found to characterise much of classroom discourse (Mroz *et al*, *ibid*). Analysed at the level of the *exchange*, the present study expresses the teaching exchanges as percentage scores for each class.[2] The study gives information on the balance of teacher and pupil initiations both within each class and between the classes, and it also informs on the broad nature of teacher and pupil verbal interactions.

<u>Transcription Key</u>

The symbols used in the transcription of teacher-pupil talk are as follows:

[laughter]	contextual information
well done!	speaker emphasis
( )	inaudible
(guess)	guess – when utterance unclear
[	concurrent speech
bold	spoken by EAL learner

Sometimes teachers ask pupils to identify letter *names* or letter *sounds*. Since the emphasis is dependent, to an extent, on who is speaking (some speakers giving a voiced 'uh' sound to consonant letter sounds, for example) the articulation has been transcribed, as far as possible, as it is sounded by the speaker – and encapsulated in inverted commas:

'tuh' the *sound* of the letter T.
'tee' the *name* of the letter T.

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[2] The segments of the Literacy Hours recorded here (Shared Text Work, Focused Word Work and Guided Reading) did not continue for the same time period in each class, teachers not adhering rigidly to the prescribed timings. Expressing the findings in percentage scores assists more authentic comparisons to be made.

However, some vowel sounds can be difficult to transcribe or confusing to read when transcribed in such a way, however. These are transcribed thus:

'O' the *name* of the letter O (i.e. rather than 'oh')
'o' the *sound* of the letter O
'U' the *name* of the letter U (i.e. rather than 'you')

Text description and interpretation

The coded transcripts were then analysed in a qualitative way – with detailed commentary and interpretation of particular sections of transcripts. This examination of the content of the teacher-pupil talk facilitated analysis of *how* the IRF sequence was being used by teachers (if, indeed, it *was* an over-riding feature of the discourse in the three classrooms, as Phase One of the study had suggested). Was 'traditional' teacher-led recitation the primary mode through which the sessions were conducted or were teachers using their 'follow-up' move in ways envisaged by Wells (1993) – to extend the pupil's answer to draw out its significance, for example. With regard to pupils' reading, what teaching and learning practices could be identified within the teacher-pupil discourse, and did these relate to established models of reading development? How appropriate were these practices for EAL learning – and what part did EAL learners themselves play in the discourse. (See 'Focusing research questions', section **7.2**)

7.4 Methodological considerations

These have been discussed more generally in section **2.4**; here, issues more particular to the present research are touched upon. With the purpose of exploring the detail of processes of teacher-pupil discourse in relation to texts and reading development, the outcomes are intended to be illuminating of practice in illustrating individual teachers' interpretation of an innovation upon which conflicting views have been expressed. With regard to teacher-pupil talk, Hughes and Westgate (1998) have commented that:

At the present time in UK schools, the need to put particular meat on the bones of general truths, or on generalised advice to teachers is acute...clear but not over-simplified models of beneficial teacher-pupil talk are at a particular premium. They are essential if teachers are to be helped to keep exploratory talk[3] as a component within the repertoire approach to the technologies of teaching of which <u>best practice</u> is currently deemed to consist.

(p 188)

Phase Two of the study aims to identify such practices positive in their promotion of pupil involvement and learning in multiethnic classrooms.

The close analysis required is informed by a relatively small data set; however, this is regarded as necessary by van Lier (1988) when greater understanding is the goal:

> *Essentially, when classroom research is conducted <u>in</u> the classroom rather than <u>about</u> the classroom, the set of data must be kept small. One lesson may yield as much useful information as ten lessons, and probably a good deal more than fifty lessons.... Small amounts of data can provide powerful analyses....*
>
> (p 4)

Referring to the position of the researcher, he continues:

> *Behind the data set, however small, the researcher brings to the task whatever insights and experience may have accumulated over the years, and this is of crucial importance. This knowledge constitutes the <u>base line</u>[2], a sense of common ground between observer and setting, which underlies efficient descriptive and analytical work.*
>
> (*ibid*)

And concerning reliability, Bogdan and Biklen comment:

> *Educational researchers come from a variety of backgrounds and have divergent interests...they will collect different types of data and reach different conclusions.... Qualitative researchers tend to view reliability as a fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study, rather than the literal consistency across different observations.*
>
> (1992: 46)

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[3] Hughes and Westgate here define 'exploratory talk' as featuring 'interpreting' or 'speculating' moves.
[2] Van Lier's note on this term reads: *The term <u>base line</u> is used here in its anthropological sense...what is essentially meant here is a touchstone of sorts which guides the ethnographer's observation and interpretation, a system of information and beliefs to which specific things the researcher sees and finds are <u>compared</u> and, indeed, which <u>selects</u> that which is seen.*

The present study analyses and discusses samples of transcribed teacher-pupil talk and thus the data may be regarded, to a degree, as 'transparent' and less subject to researcher subjectivity than that which has 'go[ne] through the researcher's mind before [it is] put on paper' (*op cit*). With regard to the coding of the transcripts, however, each of those used to form the three charts (Figures 8.1, 9.1, App. 5.1) was subject to peer examination and discussion – see reflection on research methods, section **8.7.**

Chapter summary

Chapter 7 has introduced Phase Two of the research and positioned it within some wider contemporary debates about the nature and importance of teacher-pupil talk. It has also outlined how, in exploring this topic in relation to the development of reading, the present study both replicates aspects of existing research and builds upon this. The chapter has also described the scope of the study and the research approach taken. The following two chapters detail the findings with respect to Shared Reading and Guided Reading respectively.

Chapter 8

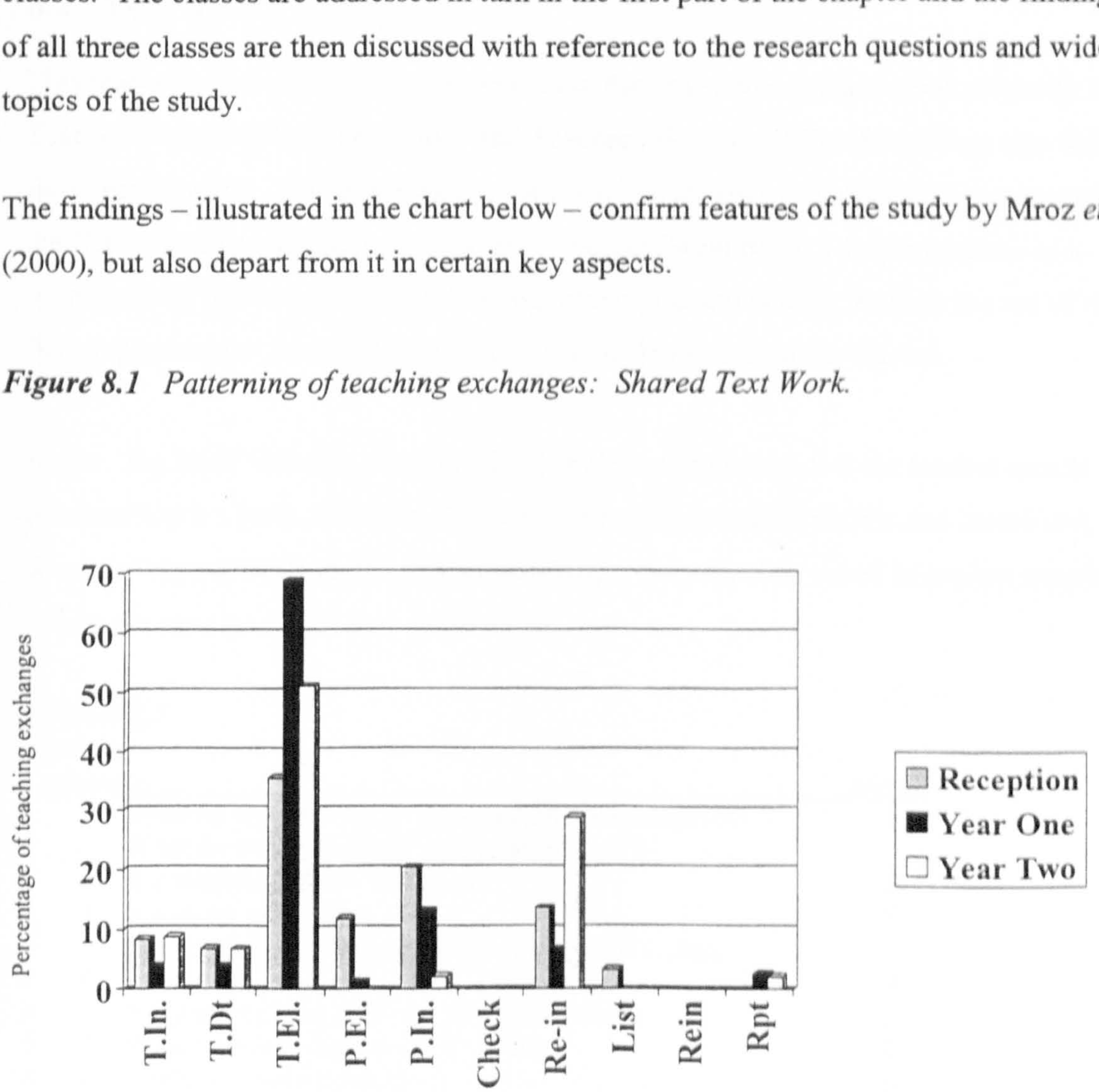
Shared Text Work

8.1 Introduction and overview of findings

This chapter describes and analyses the Shared Text Work sessions from the three classes. The classes are addressed in turn in the first part of the chapter and the findings of all three classes are then discussed with reference to the research questions and wider topics of the study.

The findings – illustrated in the chart below – confirm features of the study by Mroz *et al* (2000), but also depart from it in certain key aspects.

Figure 8.1 *Patterning of teaching exchanges: Shared Text Work.*



Mroz and colleagues found little overall variation in the patterning of the exchanges used by the teachers; however, the present study found notable differences between the three classes. While the patterning of the Year One teacher-pupil interactions showed similar results to those of the original study with the teacher predominantly retaining control over the pace, direction and lines of knowledge to be pursued, transcripts of the Year One and (in particular) the Reception class revealed pupils more actively involved in the shaping of the discourse – initiating comments, information and questions which were often accepted by the teacher and incorporated into the subsequent discussion.

8.2 Year Two

This teacher's discourse, as can be seen from the chart, was characterised primarily by Teacher elicits and Re-initiations – and Teacher informs and Teacher directs also featured fairly prominently. There was an almost complete absence of pupil contributions outside the IRF sequence elicited by the teacher – the exception being a single instance of a 'pupil inform' exchange. The following extract illustrates how, through the use of the IRF sequence, the 'frame of reference' remains firmly that of the teacher.

A new 'big book' is being introduced to the class and in turns 1-9 the teacher recalls the previous week's book, checking that pupils have remembered details and definitions about the type of book they had been studying. They are then asked to predict what type of text the new book will be – turns 10-26.

Extract 8.1

Teaching Exchanges			Moves
1	T	What do we mean by an 'information book', Keiron? What do we mean by an 'information book'?	I
2	P	It's something about ourselves.	R
3	T	It's about ourselves.	F
4	T	But what do we mean by 'information book'? Sara.	I
5	P	Um a ( ).	R
6	T	Yes but *any* book that's an information book.	F
7	T	What is an information book? Harry.	I
8	P	It tells you something about –	R
9	T	Good boy. It tells you something – it ( ) gives you information – it tells you some *facts* – information. Good boy – an information book.	F
10	T	This week we've got a different book – but *might* be an information book – I don't know.	I

		Have a look at the cover Let's work it out.	
11	T	Do you think it's an information book, Clarissa? No?	I
12	P	Because –	R
13	T	Because –	I
14	P	( )	R
15	T	Right – the front cover doesn't look like an information book because it looks as if it's got *children* on it.	F
16	T	Kind of book do you think it is, though, Ruth?	I
17	P	About people going to the park.	R
18	T	Yes, might be about people going to the park.	F
19	T	What kind of book ( ) it be do you think – Bethany? James?	I
20	P	Story book.	R
21	T	A story book – well done, a story book.	F
22	T	Do you know another name for a story book – another name for a story book – Paul? Story book – another name for a story book. Mark?	I
23	P	Poems.	R
24	T	Poems. We do get poetry books – we've had a poetry book, haven't we? Good boy. Yes – that's a different kind of book. Story book?	F
25	T	Well, an information book is called a 'non-fiction' book. So a story book is called a –	I
26	P	Fiction.	R
27	T	Good girl. Thank you Yasmin – a fiction book, isn't it Yasmin – a fiction book. And information is non-fiction, so we think it's a story book.	F

In these exchanges the brief pupil contributions, in the form of 'recall' answers, contrast starkly with the volume of teacher talk. There is little sign of questioning used to probe pupils' understanding to cause them to reflect and extend their ideas, although most of the answers give scope for this. With no pupil initiations, the 'frame of reference' is that of the teacher. Looking more closely at the mechanisms by which the teacher's – rather than the pupil's agenda remains predominant, several features can be identified:

Chaining of the teacher's questions as a series of elicits (turns 11-27) in an attempt to 'work out' what type of book the class will be reading. These end with a 'reformulation' (or what Edwards and Mercer, 1987, term 'cued elicitation') in turn 25 – the question is simplified and has built into its statement some of the information needed for the acceptable answer. In such a way, Mroz *et al* have observed, teacher directed talk creates

the *impression* of knowledge and understanding being elicited from the pupils rather than being imposed by the teacher.

The brisk pace of the questioning – facilitated by the chaining – leaves little room for pupil 'thinking time' and reflection, from which pupil initiations might occur. There are no pauses and when a child hesitates for a few seconds over an answer (turn 12) the teacher quickly pushes her to speak by repeating the child's previous utterance. The pupil speaking in turn 8 does not get to finish his sentence once he has started to provide the answer the teacher is looking for – she cuts in and provides her own elaboration on the answer to the question that she has posed.

Nomination of pupils to speak further inhibits pupil initiation.

The Shared Text Work section of the Literacy Hour continues in a similar format. Through a series of linked questions, the children are prompted to work out what the book will be about; they do this by looking at the pictures on the cover, and their predictions are then checked by reading the title. Following this, the teacher reads the first page of the book while the pupils listen. By means of eliciting questions she establishes that people featured in books are called 'characters', that the main character is a 'giant' and that names begin with a 'capital letter', which is also used to begin a sentence. The first page of the book is then read again – this time by teacher and pupils together:

Extract 8.2

Teaching Exchanges			Moves
1	T	Let's see if we can read all of that together. It's *hard*, but I know that you know a lot of words. Let's read it again.	I
2	P	*[pupils read the first page as teacher points to words]*	R
3	T	And there are a lot of words there that we know and the reason that you could read it all was we looked at the title, we knew his name, we looked at the word 'giant' together – that was a hard word – and a lot of other words you knew.	F
4	T	I'm going to put up here some of the words that you know – that you use all the time in your writing and your reading. Donna – what's that word?	I

The extract is revealing of the teacher's 'literacy discourse'. Rather than invite pupils to reflect or comment upon the text they have just read (or pausing to allow for reflection and possible initiations to arise), the teacher moves swiftly on to frame the reading process in terms of words successfully decoded. In effect, then, responses are realised *for* the pupils by the teacher herself through her use of 'Teacher informs' – as illustrated in turn 4 below:

Extract 8.3

Teaching Exchanges			Moves
1	T	Can you see a Mr Big in the picture? Do you think there's a Mr Big in there? Do you, Cora?	I
2	P	*[nods]*	R
3	T	You can see a Mr Big? I think you're right.	F
4	T	Mr Big Goes to the Park. This is one of my favourite books. We read it last year with Year One – and I think it's one of our favourite books because it's something that a lot of us do. We're talking about 'Ourselves' at the moment – our topic – an awful lot of children go to the park, *enjoy* the park. Different kinds of parks in different places. Parks are all such wonderful places to be. What a lovely picture.	I
5	T	Who do you notice in the picture that was on the cover?	I

What perspectives, on the reading process, then, are modelled in this Literacy hour session? With children's personal thoughts and ideas unsought, the teacher's agenda is firmly to the fore, and this is reflected also by the relatively large amount of teacher talk and the briefest of replies given by the children to what are mainly factual recall questions. The activity of reading is thus signalled as one in which the text is viewed as a separate, 'external' entity to the reader – and making meaning is presented in terms of the accurate decoding of the print on the page rather than a personal engagement with the text and its meanings.

8.3 Year One

In common with that in Year Two, the Year One teacher-pupil talk was characterised by a high proportion of teacher-initiating moves – mostly 'teacher elicits'. (In this class, however, there was also evidence of pupil activity in the form of 'pupil informs'). From

an analysis of the discourse itself, it can be suggested that what is realised in terms of potential for pupil development is very different from the examples discussed so far and that, rather than answering 'recall' questions, the pupils are engaged in a form of 'joint construction of meaning' with their teacher. The following extract illustrates how this occurs.

Extract 8.4

Teaching Exchanges			Moves
1	T	Andy – what do you see?	I
2	P	A mouse running ( ).	R
3	T	Where's – who's the mouse running from?	I
4	P	Cat.	R
5	T	The cat.	F
6	T	So what's the cat doing?	I
7	P	Frightening.	R
8	T	Frightening and [chasing the mouse – well done.	F
		[chasing	
9	T	What sort of place are they in? Ella?	I
10	P	In – in a garden.	R
11	T	In a garden – it's a green place, isn't it?	F
12	T	Kate – what can you see in the distance?	I
13	P	A house.	R
14	T	A house in the distance	F

In this extract, pupils give short replies to the teacher's eliciting questions; however, their task in this session is to answer the questions in terms of the 'here and now' of the illustrations in front of them rather than to simply address 'recall' questions with a right/wrong answer – and there is thus opportunity for interpretation as well as description (turns 1 and 9, for example). Through the chaining of the three elicits in turns 1-8, the teacher's questions and the child's answers produce an outline of events in terms of cause and effect. Interestingly, it is the child's (perhaps unexpected) response of 'Frightening' (turn 7) which provides the crucial dramatic element that brings the description to life. Although the pupils give the briefest of answers, this in itself adds to the dramatic effect, giving the discourse a sense of urgency. Here, then, the recitation sequence, although teacher elicited, might be seen as facilitating and validating the pupil's 'voice'.

The session continues and the pupils' attention is captured by the unfolding story depicted in the pictures.

Extract 8.5

Teaching

Exchanges			Moves
1	T	There's something happening here – something's jumping out the fire onto the dog's –	I
2	P's	Nose!	R
3	T	Nose –	F
4	T	What do you think happens?	I
5	P's	Fire.	R
6	T	Tania – can you tell us?	I
7	P	It's fire!	R
8	T	Yeah.	F
9	T	What – can you tell – that the artist who's done these pictures has made the dog's nose all –	I
10	P	Red.	R
11	T	Red.	F
12	T	So what do you think that means – it's...	I
13	P	Burning.	R
14	T	Burning – it's hot, isn't it?	F
15	T	What's the dog doing?	I
16	P's	Howl! Bark!	R
17	T	Barking – oh dear. OK.	F
18	P	Cat wake up!	I
19	T	Now, who can describe this cat's ( ) – does this cat look happy and smiley any more? Kate?	I
20	P	Looks sad.	R
21	T	Looks sad.	F
22	T	Looks a bit –	I
23	P	Cross!	R
24	T	Cross.	F
25	T	How does the mouse look? How does the mouse look?	I
26	P	Sad.	R
27	T	Bit more than sad – a bit –	I
28	P's	Worried. Worried! Aahh! Ms D – he looks – [he looks worried! [nasty!	R
29	T	I think so too.	F
30	P	He was smiling ( )	I
31	T	Hmm, but he looks cross now! The mouse looks a bit worried.	R
32	T	What happens next? They all –	I
33	P	Chase each other	R
34	T	Chase each other.	F
35	P	The cat chasing the mouse and the dog chasing the cat.	I
36	T	What's happening now? Tania, what's happening? What are they doing? What are they all doing?	I
37	P	Making a mess.	R
38	T	What are they doing? What are they doing? What are they doing, Minnie?	I
39	P	Fighting.	R
40	T	Chasing each other – they're fighting, they're making a big	F

		mess. Sit right in front of me now, please.	
41	T	What's the lady doing?	I
42	P	Frightened.	R
43	T	She's – she's asleep any more?	I
44	P	No.	R
45	T	What's she doing?	I
46	P's	Frightened! The teeth!	R
47	T	David – what's she doing? Is she asleep, David? What's she doing?	I
48	P	**Wake up.**	R
49	T	She's waking up.	F
50	P	Miss D! The teeth looks like that.	I
51	T	Look at the teeth flying up!	F
52	P's	Hahaha! Look! The sock! The sock! The sock's flying up!	I
53	T	The sock's flying up. Jumping out of her bed, isn't she?	F
54	P	MrsD! – Mrs D! –	I
55	T	shhh	

The teacher continues to use a series of elicits to build up the story and the sense of drama. The sense of urgency is increased as she cues the first few words of the response she is seeking from the pupils (turns 1,9,12,19,25,32). Again, the children produce the brief answer that moves the action forward, and the expression with which they imbue their words reveals the high level of their engagement (turns 16,28 in particular).

Active pupil participation within the IRF sequence. The session is thus characterised by *active* pupil participation within the 'IRF' sequence: rather than answering 'recall' questions, the pupils *interpret* the material in front of them (i.e. the illustrations). Their role is to provide appropriate vocabulary to fit the situation that the teacher is framing for them by her questioning; however, what is required is, to an extent, open-ended and pupils are thus involved in a more active form of learning than that which requires them to supply the correct answer to a recall question. As the story is verbally recreated, rather than judging pupils' answers, the teacher assists them in *shaping* their responses – as, for instance, in turns 19-24 and 25-31, when she pushes them towards more appropriate vocabulary.

Considering the mechanisms by which this teacher's discourse facilitates more active pupil participation within the IRF sequence, the following features can be identified. Fewer nominations of particular pupils to answer her questions are made – 5/17 in this extract – the 'floor' is thus more open to all. Questions do not have a single correct response and there is thus less pressure to find the 'correct' answer; the teacher's feedback moves are consequently less judgemental and there is no instance in this extract of the 'good boy/girl' statements used to reward a correct answer. Rather, there is the feeling of a process of joint discovery reflected in feedback moves such as turn 29 – T: 'I think so too', or in those comprising a confirmatory repetition of the pupil's answer. Such 'low control' moves have been identified as facilitating the way for pupils to make their own views, knowledge and questions known (Dillon, 1994 and Wood, 1992) – and pupils in this class do indeed offer observations of their own.

Building on pupil initiations. As the recreation of the story proceeds, the increase in dramatic tension is reflected in a departure from the IRF sequence, with the teacher dropping her feedback move – turns 41 onwards – and the several pupil initiations or 'Pupil Informs' occurring (turns 30, 50, 52) indicating deepening pupil engagement. These initiations are acknowledged by the teacher as part of the discourse and in her scaffolding feedback turn (51) she both validates and at the same time offers a reformulated version of the child's excited observation that 'The teeth looks like that!' – with her equally enthusiastic feedback comment '*Look* at the teeth flying up!' In the next turn (52) her wording is picked up and applied to a new situation by another pupil who initiates the observation that 'The sock! The sock! The sock's flying up!'

These examples of the (present continuous) verb form follow on from and echo the teacher's 'recast', in turn 49, of an EAL learner's contribution in turn 48 – that the old lady is 'wake up'. The teacher's recast into the correct form: 'She's waking up' is then echoed in turns 51, 52 & 53. By means of the visual prompt of the pictures, then, the EAL learner is enabled to both contribute alongside his peers to the development of the storyline and (potentially) have his language awareness raised.

This teacher's interactions with pupils also featured evidence of what Nyastrand & Gamoran (1991) have termed 'uptake', whereby pupils' answers are incorporated by

teachers into subsequent questions. These are thus – in contrast to recitation questions – genuine questions. In the following exchanges, a child's initiation determines the course of subsequent exchanges. One of the children has volunteered a comment about the mouse in the story and the teacher, who has not heard his whole sentence, has asked him to repeat it. Another child then asks a question which the teacher addresses:

Extract 8.6

Teaching Exchanges			Moves
1	T	The mouse is?	I
2	P	Skidding.	R
3	T	Skidding! The mouse is skidding!	F
4	T	Now, we're going to stop on this page. I want you to think about something.	I
5	P	What does that say?	I
6	T	Good point, Mae – well done!	F
7	T	Do you know what we call this – that comes out?	I
8	P	Speech bubble!	R
9	T	Is it a speech bubble?	I
10	P	Thinking bubble!	R
11	T	Thinking bubble – or *thought* bubble.	F
12	T	Mae is right – it is a thought bubble. When you see a bubble shape coming out of somebody's head, it means it's something they're thinking, doesn't it? Right, and this *mouse* has just run all the way across this field – and Nicky is right – he's skidded and stopped and he's thinking – 'enough!', 'enough!'. He's had enough of this. He doesn't like being chased any more. OK?	I
13	T	I wonder what else he could be thinking. If I cover up that word 'enough', what else could he be thinking, this poor mouse, chased all the way across the field by a cat and a dog who are really angry. What could he be thinking? Serena?	I

The exchanges continue, with pupils keen to offer their own ideas about what the mouse might be thinking, and a number of imaginative and lively alternatives are considered ('Stop that cat!'; 'EEEK!'; 'I wish I could trick those lousy animals!' etc). These contributions, which are revealing of the children's engagement and identification with the characters in the story, have been facilitated by the teacher's willingness to suspend for a few minutes her own lesson planning and to explore a line of interest initiated by the pupil in turn 5. In turn 12, the teacher sets the scene for the mouse's thinking and in her description she incorporates a previous contribution made by Nicky, describing the way in which the mouse is 'skidding' to a halt. She thus ratifies the value of his contribution and tacitly acknowledges that pupils may play a role in determining the agenda.

The 'frame of reference'. This session may be characterised as a collaborative exercise by teacher and pupils in text construction through the pictures of the book. Expressions of the depth of pupil engagement and instances of pupil initiation discussed above suggest that an atmosphere has been created in which children feel confident to contribute their own ideas, and that the 'frame of reference' does not remain exclusively with the teacher. In effect, it might be suggested, the frame of reference is essentially provided by the pictures in the book, with the teacher steering the course through the action for the pupils with her questioning – rather than acting as the arbiter of a pre-determined agenda.

The 'literacy discourse' The teachers in the two classes discussed above have shown contrasting approaches towards the reading of the enlarged texts. In the Year Two class there was a foregrounding of the *written* text – demonstrated by the emphasis on decoding this, with the illustrations used more as a helpful adjunct to such an end than regarded as embodying a dynamic of their own. Pupils are thus positioned as more passive receivers of the meanings articulated in the printed text, and the act of reading itself is framed in terms of the ability to accurately decode the written text. In the Year One class, interaction with a book is demonstrated as an active process to which readers can bring their own ideas and develop their own interpretations of meaning. 'Reading the pictures' privileges all these children as 'readers' in the first instance, since all can articulate meaning from the illustrations. By engaging with the meanings embodied in the book in this way in the first instance, a familiarity with the story is built up which will aid the subsequent reading of the printed text.

8.4 Reception Class

While the Year One discourse might be seen as conducted within the teacher's frame of reference and the Year One discourse within a reference framed by the illustrations of the book, it was in the Reception class that pupils' own relevance was most in evidence. Here the chart shows much less of a disparity in the balance between teacher and pupil initiations than in the other two classes – with a higher proportion of 'pupil elicits' and 'pupil informs'. The result was that it was the pupils, rather than their teacher, who

determined the emphasis of the discourse. In common with the Year One teacher, the Reception class teacher also used the first day of the Literacy Hour week to preview the new book by 'reading the pictures' with the class; this featured a family of elephants in 'human' form. However, whereas a particular feature of the Year One teacher-pupil discourse was the high number of rapid teacher elicits to which pupils provided the specific vocabulary to recreate the action, the approach in the Reception class was more leisurely, with the teacher acknowledging the validity of pupil initiations in determining the emphasis of the reconstruction of the story:

Extract 8.7

Teaching Exchanges			Moves
1	T	James, what do you think the elephants are all doing?	I
2	P	Going to school.	R
3	T	They're going to school – so they're getting ready.	F
4	P	What the baby's doing?	I
5	T	This one's having his hair brushed.	R
6	T	What's the baby doing, Liam?	I
7	P	Drawing.	R
8	T	He could be drawing on somebody else's book or he might be putting the pen in the satchel.	F
9	P	He's – he's doing something with his – in his bag – he's going drawing like this.	I
10	T	Right, so this – is this mummy elephant do you think – and she's getting them all ready for school – all except the baby elephant.	I
11	P	The baby doesn't go to school.	I
12	T	Why's that?	R
13	P	Because he's too little.	R
14	T	Well done.	F
15	P	To ( ) take him in the pram and then take him back.	I
16	T	That's right – mummy'll probably take him to school with her and then she'll bring him back again.	F

Pupils' frame of reference. Pupil elicits and informs, then, determine the direction of the discourse. The teacher facilitates this by taking up three pupil initiations in turns 4, 11 and 15. Her responding elicits in turns 6 and 12 can be seen as genuine questions posed in response to the preceding discourse. Thus she signals her interest in what the pupils think, and encourages further initiations. Nyastrand and Gamoran (1991) have pointed out that this results in the discourse taking on a conversation-like quality, with teachers and pupils taking turns in speaking – and indeed, it can be seen that the teacher-

dominated IRF sequence is largely absent from the discourse. Other facilitating features of this teacher's discourse are her 'low control' moves. She expresses tentativeness in her feedback move (turn 8) – 'he could...he might....', and in her summing up in turn 10 she includes an appeal to the pupils' opinion – '...do you think?'.

The teacher thus takes the role of summarising the pupils' contributions and moving the reconstruction on, while the pupils flesh out the story. In the next extract, they again determine the development of the discourse as they initiate an examination of more subtle elements of the story which might otherwise have gone unnoticed.

Extract 8.8

Teaching Exchanges			Moves
1	T	So they've been to school and come home and had a bath and now they're ready for bed.	I
2	P	Look – they're mad – like this!	I
3	T	Right – they are mad actually – that's very well spotted.	F
4	T	Let's read this.	I
5	P	How come they're mad?	I
6	T	I'm going to tell you in a minute.	R
7	T	'Mrs Large had the children bathed and in their pyjamas before they had *even* had their tea.'	I
8	T	Do you think that's why they're mad, Ricky?	I
9	P	Yes.	R
10	P	Cos they're hungry.	R
11	T	Why are they mad?	I
12	P	Cos they're hungry.	R
13	P	No! I – they're ( ) milk with chicken and peas.	R
14	P	No! I know –	R
15	T	So they're hungry and they want their tea and they've had their bath before their tea.	I
16	P	I know what they're mad for!	I
17	T	Yes Courtney?	R
18	P	They're mad cos they want to stay downstairs.	I
19	T	Right!	F
20	P	No!	I
21	P	Yes!	I

This extract reveals a high level of engagement by the pupils – there are three pupil initiations (turns 2, 5 and 16), and at turns 9/10 and 12/13/14, several pupils are keen to offer their ideas, with some disagreement arising here and at turns 20/21. Again, the pupils' agenda has come to the fore and it is in a sense both a personal and collective

agenda, since it concerns issues common to most children – perceived injustices perpetrated upon them by their elders. The extract, then, can be seen in terms of 'uptake' by the teacher of the pupils' initiated contributions and she assists them in exploring their topic of interest. Her scaffolding moves in turns 7 and 8 prompt the pupil in turn 10 to articulate the reason for the elephants' bad humour as being 'cos they're hungry.' She then incorporates this utterance into her summarising comment in turn 15 which precedes the next part of the story.

The 'literacy discourse'. Again the teacher plays a facilitating role, by way of 'low control' moves, that enables their enquiry to move forward: in turn 3 she responds to the preceding pupil initiation regarding the young elephants' demeanour, confirming its importance and thus opening the way for the following pupil elicit in turn 5. In turn 7 she offers, by way of a direct reading of the written text of the book, a *possible* explanation for the elephants' disgruntlement. The pupil's personal opinion is then sought upon the validity of this (turn 8). An alternative explanation – in pupil inform, turn 18 – is also accepted as feasible. Thus the teacher indicates to the pupils the interactive nature of the reading process – in which they may take up a position in relation to the text and draw out particular meanings from it.

8.5 Summary and discussion

This section summarises and discusses the findings from the three Shared Text Work sessions with reference to the research questions. The first two subsections below address the 'main' Research Question 2 and the third subsection (**8.5.3**) addresses the other main research question for this part of the study – Research Question 3.

8.5.1 The 'frame of reference': teacher/pupil

The 'focusing' Research Questions 2a and 2b enquired into the 'frame of reference', which, in a social constructivist view of development emphasises an active pupil role and 'uptake' and extension of pupils' contributions by the teacher. Pupil participation in the three observed classes was quite distinctive. There was an almost complete absence of active (initiated) pupil contributions in Year Two, while the Year One class discourse

featured a form of 'managed' (by the teacher) pupil activity – and also some initiations from pupils taken up by the teacher. The Reception class discourse featured the highest number of pupil initiations and the teacher responded to these, allowing them to largely determine the course of the session.

I have suggested, therefore, that in terms of whose 'frame of reference' is to the fore – in the Reception class this was indeed that of the pupils, while at the other end of the spectrum, the pre-planned agenda of the Year Two session was all-embracing. The Year One teacher, too, closely 'managed' the direction of the discourse; however, it has been suggested that, essentially, the 'agenda' was provided by the book illustrations – and thus there was what might be described as a three-way or 'triangular' frame of reference in operation during this session. (This was also true of the Reception class discourse, but the talk here was more discursive and speculative and less closely anchored to the illustrations of the book.) As in the Reception class, the Year One teacher also permitted the pupils' frame of reference to come to the fore by taking up their initiated comments and questions.

8.5.2 Patterns of verbal interaction: potential for learning

Considering the potential for pupil learning offered by these teacher-pupil exchanges, and whether their understanding is being 'probed' and their ideas 'extended' – as envisaged by the NLS *Framework* – again, the three sessions offer distinctive teacher styles. The Year Two class, addressing the teacher's agenda, supplied brief recall answers to her elicited questioning – and this is illustrated by the high number of 're-initiation' moves made by the teacher as she repeatedly pursued the desired answer. Thus, in the face of an unsatisfactory answer, rather than providing scaffolding moves to further the pupil's understanding, she turns to other children in an attempt to elicit the correct answer. There is thus scant evidence of probing and extending pupils understanding.

Within the Year One class, the communal reconstruction of the story involved the pupils in supplying vocabulary to fit the illustrations. Although carried out at a quick pace and therefore not, perhaps, an activity in which it would be appropriate to break up the momentum by extended probing of pupil's responses, there is evidence (as discussed) of the teacher using the 'follow-up' move both to push pupils towards a more precise

wording and to extend their contributions (see particularly the first extract) – this also involves a recast of an EAL learners' contribution. This teacher also 'extended' pupils' contributions in ways envisaged by Nyastrand & Gamoran (1991) and Wells (1993) by her 'uptake' of their questions – and also by weaving their contributions into the subsequent discourse – thus signalling her interest and ratifying the importance of their contributions. The outcome – '...encouraging more pupil-initiated ideas and responses and consequently promoting higher order thinking', is illustrated in the third extract from this class and the pupils' subsequent responses to the teacher's question in turn 13.

The Reception teacher's discourse was particularly characterised by 'uptake' of pupils' initiations – her questions were thus 'genuine' questions, with the result that the discourse took on a conversation-like quality, encouraging more pupil initiated ideas. A feature of her questioning was to push pupils to think through their assertions – for instance, the cause and effect involved in *why* the baby elephant doesn't go to school; *why* the elephants might be 'mad' etc. She thus probed and extended particularly the thinking of those pupils who initiated comments and questions.

EAL pupils' development

Considering these sessions in terms of the possibilities offered for EAL learners' development (Research Question 2c) the accompanying observation notes (focusing particularly upon this group of pupils) suggested that their attention was engaged when the discourse was linked closely to a visual prompt but that it tended to wander at other times, especially during extended periods of teacher (or pupil) talk. Of the three sessions, therefore, that in Year One – in which the discourse was closely anchored to the visual stimulus of the illustrations – might be viewed as the most accessible for this group of learners. Within this supportive framework, the building of vocabulary to retell the story would also be particularly useful for EAL learners' language development. Less useful for these pupils would be the extended teacher-talk ('teacher informs') of the Year Two class and the tendency towards more discursive interactions between teacher and pupils in the Reception Class. (With regard to this last point, the observation made in the exploratory phase of the present study – that the EAL learners rarely initiated comments during the whole class sessions – held true for the recorded sessions, with the result that they did not take part in the more extended teacher-pupil interactions.)

8.5.3 Perspectives on the Reading process

Turning to the concerns of Research Question 3 and the perspectives on the development of reading that are suggested by these Shared Reading sessions, two areas can be considered: the development of the more mechanical decoding skills and the response of the reader to the meanings within the text itself. A constructivist view would see the former as to an extent dependent on the latter, since it is partly through the expectations raised in the reader regarding the semantic possibilities within the text that the print itself is decoded. Raising awareness of these possibilities through an initial 'reading of the pictures' thus assists developing readers in tackling the more formal aspects of the reading process.

Use of illustrations

Each of the teachers used the pictures to elucidate the written text – which in all three classes consisted of a work of fiction, thus having particular potential for discussion and reader response. However, whereas the Reception class and Year One sessions were entirely taken up with a reading of the pictorial text, in the Year Two class, the illustrations were used more as a precursor to reading the printed text. In this class, rather than going through the whole book 'reading the pictures', each was discussed prior to a reading of the printed text beneath it. As observed in the exploratory stage of the study, the book was again divided up to last the whole Literacy Hour 'week' – and thus on this first day only two pages were looked at. The analysis has shown that it was in the classes in which the whole text was 'read' (through the pictures) that pupils were particularly responsive, and it may be suggested that the sense of build up of the action, along with the understandings established by this initial overview of the story had effectively engaged their attention and interest. They thus approach the subsequent reading of the printed text with expectations based upon these previously established understandings, which will assist them in decoding the printed word. Establishing an overview in this way can be seen as especially helpful for EAL learners in orientating them towards a comprehension of the text – important in ensuring that they learn to read with understanding.

Personal responses to texts

Concerning personal responses to the texts and the 'messages' they contained, in none of the classes were responses to the stories as a whole explicitly invited. However, teacher questioning assisted pupils in Year One to explore strands or themes within the stories – as, for example, when the teacher asked pupils how the mouse might be feeling (in the third extract). In a sense, too, in playing their part in recreating the story, pupils might be seen as offering a response of sorts. In the Reception class, observations arose spontaneously from the pupils themselves facilitated, it is suggested, by the teacher's willingness to explore pupil initiations that occurred, and also by her 'low control' moves – expressing tentativeness to show that there may be more than one 'correct' answer, for example. The discussion of the motives behind the young elephants' grumpiness was initiated and explored by the pupils themselves, assisted by the teacher's guiding question. In the Year Two class, in which pupils volunteered very few comments, it was observed that the children's responses were in a sense realised *for* them by the teacher – as illustrated in Extract 8.3.

Summary

In summary, then, the 'reading discourse' in the Reception and Year One classes can be viewed as demonstrating to the pupils the interactive nature of the reading process, in which readers can bring their own meanings and interpretations to the text with which they are engaging. In the Year One class, through the communal meaning-making by which the story was reconstructed, 'reading' was modelled as a dynamic and exciting activity – while in the Reception class a more reflective pupil 'voice' was emphasised. The Year Two discourse, on the other hand – featuring the elicitation of factual, bibliographic information – portrays texts as containing more static meanings or 'truths' and thus positions the reader rather as an external entity to the text itself. The emphasis for developing readers thus becomes focused more upon the accurate decoding of the print on the page than on responding actively to the ideas contained within the text.

8.6 Conclusion and reflection

Patterns of teacher-pupil discourse during Shared Reading, as revealed by the observations, varied considerably from class to class. The findings thus differed from the

study by Mroz *et al,* with only one of the teachers in the present study closely replicating the style of teaching featured by all 10 teachers in the former study.

Shared Reading: the NLS. While the discussion has presented the Year Two findings as potentially negative in outcome – yet it was only in this class that the suggested format for Shared Reading was implemented. This incorporates a talking through of the pictures (noting 'predictions' and 'expectations'), with readings of the printed text; and through this means, 'basic concepts of books and print' and 'patterns in language, characters, sequence of events', are to be addressed (*Module 4,* p14). (The Reception teacher read the story *to* the class and did not refer explicitly to features of the printed text, while the Year One teacher spent the session 'reading the pictures' with her pupils.) This raises again the issue, discussed in the exploratory phase of the study, of the *feasibility* of combining the Literacy Hour 'script' with a style of teaching more 'enabling' of pupil participation. Like the teachers in the study by Mroz and colleagues, the Year Two teacher was a very experienced teacher; she was also under pressure from the impending SATs[1], as discussed in the next section.

Limitations of the study. The sessions analysed here form only one quarter of the Shared Reading sessions of the Literacy hour 'week' and thus cannot be considered representative of particular teachers' practice over the whole unit of study. Subsequent Shared Reading sessions will have different emphases as the text becomes familiar and the 'learning intentions' change – and alongside this, teachers' discourse styles may also change. And in the three sessions considered here the emphasis of the lessons differed, with the Reception and Year One classes 'reading the pictures' only (the printed text not tackled) while in the Year Two class, talk about the illustrations informed a reading of the printed text. Yet another consideration would be the nature of the text being studied, as a factor in how the teacher chooses to approach the book. The visual images in the Year One book were particularly 'action packed', while those in the Reception class's book depicted a more leisurely narrative which, reflecting pupils' own experiences, would perhaps invite a more pupil-led discussion.

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[1] The 1988 Education Reform Act introduced a National Curriculum and associated assessment procedures into schools in England and Wales, whereby (in primary schools) pupils were to be assessed at ages 7 and 11 through a combination of Standard Assessment Tasks ('SATs') and teachers' own formative assessment (TA).

That teachers might adopt a pragmatic approach to discourse style, depending upon the nature of the activity, is borne out by the analysis of subsequent segments of the Literacy hour sessions – discussed in Appendix 5 and in the following chapter. It is also reflected in the research into literacy in schools conducted by Webster *et al* (1996) which, considering styles of adult-child proximation, found teachers 'adaptive to the conditions in which they operate and which prevail at any moment in time' (p 38). While this research was carried out prior to the introduction of the Literacy Hour, the present study suggests that within a curriculum closely prescribed in terms of content and organisation, at individual classroom level there remains a variety of practice relating to teacher-pupil discourse styles. With regard to Shared Reading, the aim of which is to *model* the reading process to pupils, this can arguably result in very different messages for pupils regarding the nature of the activity of reading and their own positioning as readers.

8.7 Reflection on research method

The sample

Reflection on issues relating to the sample has been touched upon in the above section. There are many variables which may impact upon the manner in which a teacher interacts with pupils, including: the type of book used, the particular 'learning intentions', the needs and age of the pupils and, possibly, advice from LEA advisors.

In an interview at the beginning of the new school year, for example, the Year Two teacher had expressed her concern at the ('very poor') level of literacy attainment of the class and the implications this could have for the forthcoming SATs results. She indicated that her teaching would need to address this issue, and the emphasis on the rehearsal of decoding skills may well have been an expression of this. (A similar point regarding pressure of SATs testing on Year Two teachers was made by a participant at a conference in which a paper based on the present chapter was given.) [2]

[2] Pertinent to discussion of the teaching style adopted by the Year Two teacher and its similarity to that of the teachers in the study by Mroz et al is the information that the authors give about their sample teachers, who had been included in the piloting phase of the NLP and had also been identified by the local authority's NLS co-ordinator as 'effective teachers of the Literacy Hour'. The Year Two teacher was herself the English co-ordinator for the school and, as such, the school-based recipient of LEA training for Literacy Hour implementation – charged with 'cascading' this training to other colleagues. In the light of research findings, then, there may be a lack of clarity over what is required, not only on the part of class

As a result of such variables, it is perhaps unrealistic to consider the feasibility of making definitive statements, whatever the size of the sample. The findings of the present small study suggest that discussion of the different discourse *styles* that teachers contingently adopt during the Literacy hour may be more reflective of Literacy Hour practice, and this is developed in Chapter 10.

Sinclair & Coulthard's discourse analysis framework

The adaptation of Sinclair & Coulthard's framework provided clear information regarding the balance of participation of teacher and pupils in each of the three sessions. And the Year Two class discourse, taking place within the teacher's 'frame of reference', was captured by the three-part 'IRF' exchange structure that the framework sets out. The framework has also effectively 'captured' the more enabling form of collaborative talk between Year One teacher and pupils, facilitating identification of the helpful moves contained within this talk.

The framework was less descriptive of the Year One and Reception class discourse, which departed from strict adherence to the IRF sequence during this segment of the Literacy hour. The exchange sequence was observed to lengthen, often to an 'IRIRF' pattern (identified as descriptive of conversational exchanges by Francis & Hunston, 1992). There were more pupil initiations in these classes with, at times, several pupils contributing more or less at once and this raised dilemmas about coding, making it difficult to ascertain which contribution the teacher then responded to – and which was thus effective in moving the talk forward, particularly when the teacher's eliciting move did not make a nomination of pupil to speak.

There was also a sense in which, through *choosing* to answer a more open-ended question thrown open to 'the floor' by the teacher, pupils were in effect *initiating* (as well as responding). There was sometimes a feeling that a form of collective 'sense-making' was going on, with various contributions legitimately thrown into the arena and allowed their place – though not necessarily acknowledged verbally by the teacher. Later the

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teachers but also by those staff at managerial LEA level whose role is to advise schools and oversee the implementation of the NLS.

teacher might summarise the pupils' points to establish a collective or consensual meaning – as illustrated, especially by the Reception class teacher. These considerations made the discourse difficult or impossible to capture within the coding framework.

The difficulty of coding such discourse led to a few differences of interpretation with the 'peer' who checked the data. For example, she disagreed with my encapsulation of turn 202 (Appendix 8, Shared Text Work) as simply a 'feedback' move, arguing that it contained a 'teacher inform' regarding garden 'gnomes', which, of course it does. However, it is also a form of correction to a particular pupil of his previous initiation in turn 201 and might thus be confined within a 'feedback' description. Within the whole class context of this session, I decided to leave turn 202 as 'feedback' rather than subdivide it with an additional 'teacher inform' – since the teacher did not elaborate on this point to the class as a whole.

In summary, then, the analysis and interpretation in this chapter has illustrated positive use of 'traditional' teacher-eliciting IRF sequences (particularly in the Year One reconstruction of the story). It has also illustrated how 'Teacher inform' moves can be used in very different ways: in Year One – to frame, in a sense, pupils' thought *for* them; in Year One – to incorporate and extend pupils' contributions, and in the Reception class – to collate and summarise various pupil contributions and move the discourse forward. Distinctions between the different types of teacher-initiated discourse are, of course, lost on a mere perusal of the *patterning* of teacher-pupil exchanges presented in quantitative chart form. The text description and interpretation was, therefore, a crucial component of the analysis. Thus the information supplied by Sinclair & Coulthard's framework on patterns of participation, when combined with the text description and analysis, enabled the research questions to be effectively considered.

Appendix 5 illustrates a more straightforward application of framework to data during the Focused Word Work segments of the three Literacy Hours, which followed directly on from the Shared Text Work discussed here. The next chapter considers teacher-pupil talk during the Guided Reading component of the Literacy Hours.

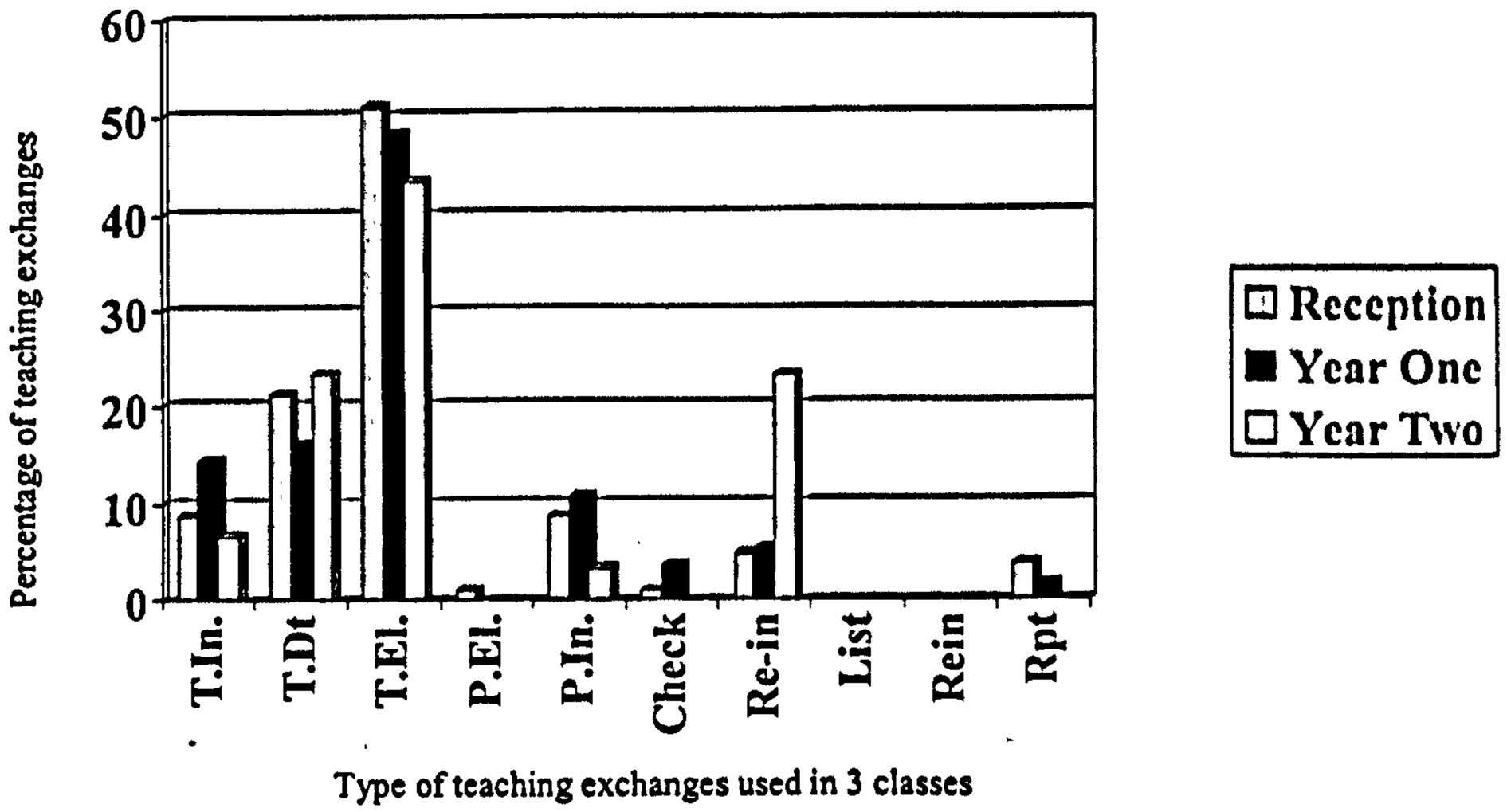
Chapter 9

Guided Reading

9.1 Introduction and overview of findings

Chapter 7 describes and analyses the Guided Reading sessions from the three classes in turn and this is followed by a general discussion addressing the research questions.[1] The chart below shows the teaching exchanges for the classes during the three Guided Reading sessions.

***Figure 9.1** Patterning of teaching exchanges: Guided Reading*



[1] *A note on the data*
As stated in section 7.3.1, two sessions – Reception and Year One – are taken from the same Guided Reading sessions as detailed in Phase One of the study. The Year Two data comprises a separate session to that previously described. While the chart depicts interactions during Guided Reading at which the teacher was present, there were periods in each of the three sessions when the teacher left the group to continue reading unaided while she attended to the needs of the rest of the class. Pupil utterances taking place at these unsupervised times (mainly comprising reading of the text aloud) are not included here.

The chart shows a similar pattern of teacher-controlled discourse in proportion to pupil initiations as occurred during the Shared Reading. Within the teacher-initiated discourse, however, the proportion of 'teacher direct' moves in all three classes increases – thus reflecting the more active nature of the group work activities. A particular feature of the 'Teacher direct' moves during Guided Reading sessions were those concerned with synchronizing pupils' actions in relation to the books – especially in the Reception and Year Two classes, where all the group decoded the same piece of text at once. The following two examples illustrate this:

Reception Class

T. Okay. Let's look at the first picture on page 2 – *on page 2*. Can you all find page 2? Put it down in front of you, Jamie, then I can make sure that you're following the words. Can you all find page 2? No – put it flat and have a look at the picture on page 2. Who'd like to tell me what they can see...?

Year Two

P. 'My friend Joshua likes to play on the drums.' *[reading aloud]*
'He can play [
T. [Are you all following? Have you all got your finger where Cora's reading?

At times, the teacher-talk expended in ensuring that all pupils performed the same action in unison seemed disruptive of the flow of the session and to the meanings being built up.

Returning to the chart – again, there are higher numbers of pupil initiations (mainly 'Pupil informs') in the Reception and Year One classes than in Year Two. These are, however, lower than during the Shared Text Work segment of the Literacy Hours. Given that Guided Reading involves teacher and a small group of pupils interacting closely with a book, more rather than fewer pupil initiations might perhaps have been expected here – as teacher and pupils talk about the book together. However, as reported in Phase One of the study, the Reception and Year One teachers were absent for the stage of the session when such initiations might have been expected. And the Year Two teacher's style, as in the first session observed, involved leaving the group to circulate around the rest of the class; again the 'Return to the text' and the 'Follow-up' activities were omitted.

9.2 Year Two

While the Year Two Guided Reading session discussed here is a different one to that reported in Phase One, the format of the session was the same, with pupils themselves previewing the book via the pictures while the teacher organised other groups in the class. She then returned and supervised the pupils reading, left them to read unsupervised while she checked the other groups and then returned and continued monitoring the reading. In contrast to the other two classes, this session did feature a (fairly brief) 'Return to the text' slot in which the teacher checked children's comprehension of key themes of the story.

The 'frame of reference'

With the teacher's absence at the start of the session, the pupils have the opportunity to develop their own responses to the pictures - they don't, however, discuss these with each other, but rather work separately. The chart shows that the nature of their interactions with the teacher was almost exclusively in the form of responses to her questions or directions (there was only a single instance of a pupil-initiated interaction). The teacher's questions were not 'open-ended', but rather required responses containing specific information, and pupils were not invited to give personal responses to the story or the issues raised in it (which were topical, touching on issues of 'difference'). There were, then, few opportunities for pupils to discuss their own thoughts and ideas within the discourse of this session.

Teaching Strategies

The focus of the teacher's verbal interactions with pupils was concerned with their reading of the printed text and their comprehension. At the start of the session, the group were asked what the pictures had suggested to them about the subject of the book, the teacher then related this to the title of the book and asked the group to read the first sentence aloud together. In the following extract, the pupils have read the first few words:

Extract 9.1

Teaching Exchanges			Moves
1	T	Now, the next word is – what? 'This is my friend ….' What does it begin with, Ken?	I
2	**P**	**'juh'**	**R**
3	T	'juh'	F
4	T	Try and sound it out. Please put your hands up if you want to speak to me on this table. *[addressing pupils working at another table]* 'This is my friend….' *[cueing pupils]* You all try and sound it out together.	I
5	P's	( )	R
6	T	Now, you said 'O'. Is that the *sound* of that letter?	F
7	T	The sound –(add?) the letters together.	I
8	P	'juh'- 'O' –	R
9	T	Why 'O'? What sound does 'O' make? 'O' is the name.	F
10	T	What sound does 'O' make, Cora? Could you put the book in the middle, please Sana? No, in the *middle*, Sana. That's it.	I
11	P	'o' *[pronouncing the letter sound as in 'pɒt'].*	R
12	T	'o' – good girl!	F
13	T	So what's the name do you think, Cora?	I
14	P	( )	R
15	T	Can you sound out the *name* for me?	I
16	P	( ) *[no discernable response from pupil]*	R
17	T	'juh'-'o'-'sh'-'U'- 'a' *['a' pronounced 'uh']* - Joshua. 'This is my friend, Joshua.'	F I
18	T	Can you find the word 'Joshua' on the next page? Put the book flat please, Ken. Right, so the name that perhaps you didn't know is 'Joshua'. Going to ( ) best friend Joshua – want you to start reading quietly by yourself. *[Teacher leaves group]*	

In line with NLS guidelines, the teacher gives considerable attention to this decoding exercise – 'sounding out' the name 'Joshua'. The first letter sound is correctly identified in turn 2, thus giving a partial clue, but the discussion becomes somewhat bogged down in attempts to establish the *sound* of the letter 'O' (turns 5-12) – and Cora is unable to respond successfully to the teacher's exhortation in turn 15 to 'sound out the name'. Eventually, in turn 17, it is the teacher herself who sounds out and decodes the word. While the name 'Joshua' may have been unfamiliar to pupils and therefore more difficult to decode, the make-up of the word itself illustrates a potential problem with the strategy of 'sounding out', since the last two letters cannot be predictably sounded out. The 'U' is pronounced by its *name,* rather than its sound (reversing, therefore, the advice given by

the teacher in turn 9), and the 'a' with an 'uh' sound – unmatched either to its name or sound.

When the teacher returns to the group, she asks them to take turns in reading out aloud – the rest of the group following, pointing to the text. Apart from the initial difficulty with the word 'Joshua', discussed above, the text presents few problems for the group and as the pupils read, the teacher's role is mainly one of listening, nominating the readers and making sure all pupils point to the words in unison.

As well as the 'sounding out' of difficult words, another teaching strategy was the checking of pupils' comprehension during and after the reading – for example:

Extract 9.2

Teaching Exchanges			Moves
1	T	What does he like to do on the swings? Sana? Maryan?	I
2	P	( )	R
3	T	What does he like to do on the swings?	I
4	P	( )likes to go up and then [ ].	R
5	T	Yes, he likes going – what?	F
6	T	How does he – what does -	I
7	P	High.	R
8	T	High. Good girl, yes.	F
9	T	And the last page, Cora.	I

When the pupils have finished reading, the teacher addresses a point of comprehension linked to the theme of the book. This is described below.

EAL learners

There were three EAL learners in the group and, like the rest of the pupils, they had little difficulty in decoding the printed text. The observation showed that during the session the teacher's questioning was particularly addressed to the EAL learners – especially those questions checking understanding of what had been read. In the concluding part of the Guided Reading session, teacher-elicits are used to probe Ken's understanding of the term 'best friend':

Extract 9.3

Teaching Exchanges			Moves
1	T	What kind of friend is he, Ken? What – what friend is he? Joshua is – his *what* friend? His –	I
2	**P**	**Best.**	**R**
3	T	You only know that because Fay's whispering 'best' – and, Fay, it doesn't help Ken to think. It's kind of you to help him, but please let him think for himself, because I'm sure he's got a very good idea.	F
4	T	What does 'best friend' mean, Ken? What does it mean – 'best friend'?	I
5	**P**	***Really* best friend.**	**R**
6	T	Yes, it's *really* best friend.	F
7	T	What does 'best' mean – if someone's your 'best friend'?	I
8	**P**	**Like your best toy.**	**R**
9	T	Pardon?	I
10	**P**	**Like your best toy.**	**R**
11	T	Yes, but – um – who's *your* best friend in the class?	I
12	**P**	**Mark.**	**R**
13	T	Mark.	F
14	T	Why is Mark your *best* friend?	I
15	**P**	**Because –**	**R**
16	T	Why is Mark your *best* friend? Sara, get on! *[to child at another table]*	I
17	**P**	**Because – he's been kind to me.**	**R**
18	T	He's kind to you.	F
19	T	So 'best' is something that's really good, isn't it? ( ) your 'best' – it's because there's something very special about them that you like – something very, very special. Well done.	I

As illustrated in previous sections, pupils' elicited responses are here incorporated into a teacher-discourse which frames ideas *for* them, rather than encouraging, exploring and extending pupils' own contributions in such a way that they will be active in articulating their own understandings and concepts. Ken indicates early on (turn 5) that he has an understanding of the phrase 'best friend', and, in his attempts to answer the teacher's probing question in turn 7, re-applies (turn 8) the adjective 'best' to another context of importance to him. In the end (turn 19) it is the teacher, rather than the pupil, who defines the word 'best' and thus she herself answers her own initial question posed in turn 4.

9.3 Year One

This session is described in detail in Phase One of the study. Again, the 'reading of the pictures' of the book in the Year One session took a different form to that which had

occurred during the Shared text work. Whereas the teacher and pupils had, in the former session, been engaged in actively *recreating* the story – in the Guided Reading session, the emphasis was on *describing* the pictures in a much more detached manner. The format of the session remained the same, though – in this class the 'reading' of the pictures was not broken up at the end of each page by a print decoding exercise

The 'frame of reference'

The session progressed mainly through a teacher-controlled 'IRF' eliciting format. The direction and content of the discourse was thus decided by the teacher. However, with the illustrations as the topic of focus, the questions were to an extent open-ended, giving pupils some opportunity to bring their own ideas and interpretation to the discourse:

Extract 9.4

Teaching

Exchanges			Moves
1	T	Donna, can you tell us anything about the picture?	I
2	P	In some grass.	R
3	T	In some grass – OK.	F
4	T	Clarissa?	I
5	P	Um – it is – the cow's in the hole.	R
6	T	The cow in the hole.	F
7	T	It's called The Cow in the Hole.	I
8	T	Do you think that – that cow's sitting in a hole? Does it look like it's sitting in a hole?	I
9	P	It's standing up in a hole.	R
10	T	Right – you think it's standing up in a hole?	F
11	P	Yeah, yeah that –	R
12	T	Yes – it's standing in a hole, isn't it?	F
13	T	I wonder why – *why* do you think that cow's standing in a hole, Bethany?	I
14	P	He might of chewed all the ( ).	R
15	T	Sorry?	R
16	P	Might of chewed on the bottom at where he's gone down in the ( ).	R
17	T	It might've chewed lots of grass and made a hole? Right.	F
18	T	Danielle?	I
19	P	He was walking along where – where and ( ) and fell into that hole.	R
20	T	Yes – it might have just fallen into the hole.	F
21	T	Do you think the cow can get out of the hole?	I
22	P	No.	R
23	T	Maybe – we don't know, do we?	F
24	P	He might str( ).	I
25	T	That's right, the cow ( ).	F

In the *interpretation* of the illustrations, then, pupils had opportunities to present their own ideas and that this engaged their interest is indicated by pupils keen to offer their ideas (turns 14/16, 19, 24). The teacher doesn't always nominate pupils to speak and thus the 'floor' is more open. While the teacher's 'agenda' controlled the discourse, then, pupils were given a 'voice' within that agenda.

Teaching strategies

As the teacher was not present to hear the pupils read the printed text (see Phase One), there is no evidence of how she supported them individually with their decoding skills. The discussion here is therefore confined to teacher-pupil interactions *about* the book. Following some questioning on the bibliographic information displayed on the covers of the book, pupils described the pictures and then the teacher *modelled* reading strategies *to* the group – reading the printed text to them while they followed, and demonstrating intonation and the function of 'speech marks'.

This teaching style is reflected in the chart, which indicates that a feature of the teacher's discourse was her use of 'Teacher informs'. In addition to those 'Teacher informs' addressing the printed text, the 'teaching discourse' in this class also touched upon wider societal issues. The book opened up several opportunities for such 'Teacher informs', the first beginning in turn 10 below:

Extract 9.5

Teaching Exchanges			Moves
1	T	Mary, look at the next picture – can you tell us about it?	I
2	P	**The boy and the girl come.**	R
3	T	Pardon?	I
4	P	**( )**	R
5	T	The boy and the girl are coming?	F
6	T	But if you look at the cow in the hole, Mary – whose pushing the cow now?	I
7	P		
8	T	'Fire...'? *[cueing reponse]*	I
9	P		
10	T	We – we call them, the people that put out fires – instead of calling them the 'fireman' or a 'firewoman', we can say that they are 'fire*fighters*'.	I
11	T	Can you say that?	I
12	Ps	'Firefighters'.	R
13	T	Because ( ) they're doing is they're *fighting* the fire, aren't	I

		they? If somebody has to put out a fire, they have to *fight* the fire, so they call them a 'fire*fighter*'.	
14	P	I know why – I know why ( ) they go inside and they ( ).	I
15	T	That's right, that's right – and it might be a man *or* a woman, mightn't it? A lady or a man. O.K.	F I
16	T	So the firefighters are trying to push the cow and he can't – the cow won't get out, so along comes the boy and the girl and *next*...	
17	T	Clarissa – tell us what happens next – look at the pictures and the words.	I

A few turns before the extract above, one of the pupils has identified a 'fireman' in the picture and this presents an opportunity for the teacher to introduce issues of equal opportunities to the pupils – which she does with some conviction. The pupil keen to contribute to the discourse in turn 14 is permitted a space to make his point about the work of the firefighter; this is briefly acknowledged by the teacher before she returns to her theme. Finally, in turn 16, she returns to the observation made by Mary in turn 2 and asks Clarissa to pick up the story. A little later, the teacher again challenges the child's assumptions in turn 2:

Extract 9.6

Teaching Exchanges			Moves
1	T	Do you know who that woman is? *[in the illustration]*	I
2	P	Mum.	R
3	T	The mum, do you think? Right.	F
4	T	Do you think she works on the farm? Think she's the farmer as well?	I
5	T	O.K. And what are the girl and boy doing?	I

There was, then, some limited evidence of probing and extending of pupils' answers – as also instanced below:

Extract 9.7

Teaching Exchanges			Moves
1	T	What are the policemen doing, Clarissa?	I
2	P	They're trying to pull them out of the hole.	R
3	T	Are they trying to *pull* the cow – or are they trying to *push* the cow?	I I
4	P	Push the –	R
5	T	They're trying to push the cow, aren't they?	F

Here, the teacher pins the pupil down to a more precise use of language. Her method of doing this is by use of a 'reformulation', or 'cued elicitation', in which (as discussed earlier) she gives in her question (turn 3) some of the information needed for the acceptable answer.

EAL learners

There was one EAL learner in this group on the day of the recording, Mary, who was observed to be very quiet during the whole-class and group-work sessions in which the teacher was present – and did not initiate any comments at these times. Discussing the pictures of the book enabled the teacher to check Mary's vocabulary – which she did with eliciting questions, here in connection with the cover of the book:

Extract 9.8

Teaching Exchanges			Moves
1	T	What can you *see* on the front of the book, Mary?	I
2	**P**	**Flower.**	**R**
3	T	A flower.	F
4	T	And what's the animal?	I
5	**P**	**A cow.**	**R**
6	T	It's called a cow, isn't it?	F
7	T	What's the cow *inside*, Mary? It's in a –	I
8	**P**	**Farm.**	**R**
9	T	It's in a farm – O.K.	F
10	T	Bethany, can you tell us anything about the picture?	I

While the eliciting questions were useful as a vocabulary check for the printed words of the book, they failed to produce the information that the cow was in a 'hole' – necessary for a reading of the title. A little later on, Mary is asked to describe another picture – reproduced in Extract 9.5 – `in which the 'firefighters' are trying to push the cow out of the hole. Again, Mary makes a connection with a section of the picture which does not relate to the print at the bottom of the page (turns 2/4) – and has her focus redirected by the teacher to the cow and the firefighters. She is, however, unable to answer the teacher's question in turn 6 and its reformulation in turn 8 – and remains silent. The teacher herself then provides the answer.

For all children and especially for EAL learners, the initial preview of the book through the illustrations is particularly important. However, rather than probing and extending

Mary's understanding, the teacher follows her own agenda – an agenda largely determined by the necessity of moving towards a decoding of the print at the bottom of each page of the book. Within the remit of the 10-12 minutes of a Guided Reading session, in which all pupils are following the same procedure at the same time, there thus appears to be little opportunity for gearing teaching to more individual needs.

9.4 Reception Class

A fairly full description of this session was given in section **4.6.2.** The present section provides illustration of the points made there with transcripts of teacher-pupil talk.

Whose agenda?

As in the Shared Text Work, teacher and pupils spent considerable time looking at the pictures on each page of the book. In this session, though, rather than the pupils largely determining the course of the discussion, this was now mainly controlled by the teacher in the form of IRF eliciting questions regarding objects depicted in the pictures (and which would subsequently feature in the written text).

Extract 9.9

Teaching Exchanges			Moves
1	T	What can you see, Lee?	I
2	P	Er – I can see a car and ( ) and a train.	R
3	T	Well done – you can see lots of toys.	F
4	T	What about you?	I
5	P	I can see – um – a moon.	R
6	T	Where's the moon?	I
7	P	*[points to moon in picture]*	R
8	T	So is it the day-time or the night-time?	I
9	P	The night-time.	R
10	T	Night-time – right	F
11	T	Right – let's have a look at the words.	I

There were, however, one or two instances of pupils' agenda coming to the fore in differing interpretations of the pictures:

Extract 9.10

Teaching Exchanges			Moves
1	T	And he's got something in his hand and he's got a blanket in one hand and he's got something in his other hand.	I
2	**P**	**Letter.**	**R**
3	T	It's – sorry?	I
4	**P**	**A letter.**	**R**
5	T	A letter, is it?	F
6	P	Uh-uh! Milk! Milk!	I
7	**P**	**No!**	**R**
8	P	It's a ( )	I
9	P	Milk! [Milk!	I
10	P	[It's a (teddy?)	I
11	P	Milk!	I
12	T	Oh, I –	I
13	P	It's a post letter.	I
14	T	( ) it could be a letter, couldn't it?	R
15	P	Milk! Milk!	I
16	P	Is a post letter!	R
17	T	It could be a letter.	F
18	T	I thought it [was –	I
19	P	[Not milk!	I
20	P	No – is ( )!	R
21	T	I thought it was a glass of milk but it *could* be a letter, couldn't it? It could be. Actually, it will tell us in the words – it will tell us.	F
22	T	So do you want to read the words for me?	I
23	T/P	'My milk...	R
24	T	So it is a glass of milk!	I
25	P	No! It's a letter!	R
26	T	No, Lee, it says 'My milk and my blanket' – so it *is* a glass of milk.	F

Several pupils here dispute each others interpretation of a picture, the teacher's 'low control' moves (turns 5,14,17,18,21) again facilitating their 'voice'. They stick tenaciously to their particular viewpoints – and this suggests that issues within their social relationships are possibly playing a role in this discourse. An alternative 'reading' might see this as denoting their high level of engagement with the activity – they could hardly be described (in the popular term) as 'passive learners'.

Teaching strategies

However, apart from one or two such episodes of a 'disputational' nature, there were – as observed in Chapter 4 – no discussions/responses to the book as a whole invited by the teacher or offered by the pupils, and little evidence of children's understanding being

probed and extended. The teacher's 'scaffolding' moves were, rather, expended on the decoding of the print:

Extract 9.11

Teaching Exchanges			Moves
1	T	Put your finger by the first letter of the title.	I
2	T	What letter is it?	I
3	P's	'tuh'	R
		'tee'	
4	T	It's a 'tuh'.	F
5	T	So can anybody guess what that word might be? Halina?	I
6	P	**'Time'**	R
7	T	'Time' – well done.	F
8	T	Right – put [your –	I
9	P	['Tidy-up-time.'	I
10	T	Could be 'Tidy-up-time.'	R
11	T	Put your finger on the *second* word.	I
12	T	What does that begin with?	I
13	P	**'fuh'**	R
14	T	'fuh'	F
15	T	Can you guess what it might say? We might be able to work it out with the last word.	I
16	T	Put your finger on the last word.	I
17	T	What letter's that?	I
18	P's	'buh'	R
		'bee'	
19	T	'buh'	F
20	T	Can you guess what that says – 'buh'-'eh'-'duh'.	I
21	P	'Tidy-up' *[ignored by teacher]*	R
22	T	'Bed'.	
23	T	'Time', 'bed' – this middle [letter is a -	I
24	P	**['Time for bed'**	R
25	T	'Time for bed' – well done.	F
26	T	Put it on the floor. *[referring to pupil's book – the group is sitting on the carpet for this session]*	I
27	T/Ps	'Time for bed.'	I
28	T	Can you all put your fingers on the title and we'll read it together.	I
29	T/Ps	'Time for bed.'	R
30	T	O.K. Let's look at the first picture on page 2.	I

This episode, reproduced at length, illustrates the print-decoding strategy adopted by the teacher; a similar sequence of moves was repeated for each page of the book. In the extract, teacher and pupils decode the title of the book by 'sounding out' the first letter of each word and using this to guess what the word might be. The strategy is not completely successful, however – while Halina identifies the first word, 'time', the next

two words are not immediately decoded and the teacher herself supplies the third word 'bed'. She also introduces another strategy for decoding unknown words – reading on to the end of the sentence and using the general sense as a clue to 'unlocking' the individual word (turns 16-25). Following these 'scaffolding' moves, it is again Halina who, in turn 24, supplies the correct title.

However, some considerable time – 30 turns – has been spent on decoding the three-word title which may perhaps have been more readily accessible to pupils had they 'previewed' the book by a 'reading of the pictures' of the entire text prior to a decoding of the print (as had taken place during the Shared Text Work) – thus giving them an overall sense of the content of the book.

Within this episode another pupil interjects several times with a suggested title – initially, after the decoding of the first word of the title 'time' (turn 6) by Halina. Following on from this, the pupil offers 'tidy-up time' as the title of the book – which, given the cover illustration, would seem a not unintelligent 'guess'. It is possible too that the classroom context, in which 'tidy-up time' is a regular teacher direction to pupils, is also associated with this response. The teacher acknowledges it as a possibility in her feedback turn (10), before continuing with the decoding exercise. Here, then, is an example of children's established knowledge and understanding being brought to bear; it is, however, not followed up by the teacher and a later repetition (turn 21) is ignored.

Considering, then, the particular teaching strategies employed by the teacher – she can be seen to be addressing those decoding skills listed in the NLS for Guided Reading (see section 4.3.1). The more general advice given in the *Framework* concerning probing and extending of pupils' understanding, however, is not evidenced here. (A possible extension to the contribution by the pupil described above, for example, might have been to compare initial sounds of the words in the *suggested* title with those actually printed on the book to see if they matched – or to check the word order.)

EAL learners

The two EAL learners in the group played a full part in the session – there were instances of both pupils initiating answers to questions when the teacher did not nominate a

particular pupil to speak. While the describing of the pictures was a particularly accessible activity for these pupils, it can be seen also, from the above transcript, that it was the EAL learner, Halina, who successfully decoded the title of the book. Throughout the session Halina was active in supplying initial sounds to assist in identify words. Liala, the other EAL learner, also responded confidently to the teacher's questions:

Extract 9.12
Teaching

Exchanges			Moves
1	T	What can you see, Liala?	I
2	P	**I can see a cupboard and a flower.**	R
3	T	A cupboard and a flower.	F
4	T	We actually call this a 'chest of drawers' cos its lots of different drawers. It's got a lovely flower on the top. I can see – I can see a big bear by the door – I think that might be a Daddy bear.	I
5	T	Who can you see? *[to Liala]*	I
7	P	**Um-um-um-baby sister bear.**	R
8	T	Where?	R

In this exchange, the describing of the pictures facilitates the clarification of a vocabulary item (turn 4). This, however, is presented as a 'teacher inform' rather than as a point for discussion – the teacher perhaps aware of the limited time available. There is thus no evidence of Liala's reaction to this piece of information. The teacher continues, expressing a tentative suggestion of her own (turn 5) about the picture, and in turn 7, Liala echoes and adapts the teacher's suggestion of 'a Daddy bear' with her suggestion of 'baby sister bear'. While Halina and Liala's English is sufficiently developed to enable them to listen and respond with understanding to the teacher's discourse at this level – the discussion of the pictures and the simple text itself being concerned with the naming of familiar objects – it is not possible to ascertain whether they would have been able to access discussion of the story and its nuances on a more general or abstract level since the 'Return to the text' segment of the session did not take place.

9.5 Summary and discussion

Returning, now, to the research questions (section **7.2**), how can these Guided Reading sessions be summarised in terms of teaching/learning practices in connection with

reading development? The main Research Question 2 is discussed in the following two subsections, and Research Question 3 is addressed in the third subsection (**9.5.3**).

9.5.1 Patterns of teacher-pupil interaction: the 'frame of reference'.

Teacher-pupil interactions were teacher 'framed' in all three classes and while there were some instances of questioning of a 'probing' nature, this was mainly angled towards eliciting a particular response from pupils rather than in *extending* or *developing* the ideas pupils themselves offered. However, the extent to which this might be considered feasible at all in these relatively short and demanding (re: curriculum items to be covered) sessions has already been questioned in Phase One of the study. And the 'realities' of classroom life meant that all three teachers found it necessary to leave the group for several minutes at a time in order to check on the rest of the class.

9.5.2 Interactions and strategies of pupil learning: 'decoding' pictures and print.

The teacher-elicitations which characterised the Guided Reading discourse can broadly be considered as being angled, in all three classes, towards supporting the decoding of the printed text of the book. This was realised in practice in different ways, however. Teachers in the Reception and Year Two classes applied decoding techniques to the print, and as such may be considered to be fulfilling directions that:

> *At Key Stage 1, the teacher's first priority must be to teach efficient and fluent decoding skills as rapidly as possible.*
>
> (*Module 4* p 5)

In Year One, the eliciting of information about the illustrations was angled towards producing the particular vocabulary which would be needed to decode the printed text. However, decoding techniques as such were not overtly practised, since the teacher read the story *to* the pupils while they followed; she then left the group to read independently.

Decoding the printed text

What particular 'decoding' strategies were employed in Reception and Year Two classes, then, and how might these be considered to (potentially) further pupil learning? The transcripts show teachers using two strategies: that of 'sounding out' was the main strategy used to 'unlock' a difficult word – and examples of this in use are given in the present chapter; another strategy was that of reading on to the end of the sentence in order

to gain a clue to the word from the general sense of the sentence – the Reception class teacher is shown using this method.

Considering in more detail the former strategy, the transcripts detail attempts made to sound out the words 'bed' and 'Joshua'. In these instances neither was wholly successful, the teacher finally answering her own question. Observation notes accompanying the audio-recordings comment upon the verbal 'effort' expended by the teachers in eliciting the correct answer, while at the same time trying to ensure synchronisation of the group's movements (all pointing to a given letter/word at the same time, for example). There were two effects resulting from this:

- The *flow* of the reading (and thus, by implication, the understandings being generated) was broken up.
- The teacher-role was particularly *active* in eliciting moves, while pupils were positioned in a contrastingly *passive* role.

Discussion

Guided Reading is described as a replacement to the widespread practice of 'individualized reading' (and as providing a significantly higher degree of teaching time for each child) – *Module 4,* p17. However, my previous experience of teachers working one-to-one with pupils during 'individualized' reading sessions is of an active role for the *pupil* (who is reading) while the teacher takes a role that is only *contingently* active – i.e. when the pupil requires assistance. As realised in the Reception and Year One classes, these roles were thus reversed: when the teacher was present, pupils were passively positioned. In the Year Two class, in which the teacher did implement the section of the Guided Reading in which pupils were monitored as they read independently, the available time for supporting *individual* children's reading was nevertheless brief.

As observed in Phase One of the study, however, the sessions did not follow the prescribed NLS format. Each was constructed differently. They might thus be regarded as examples of teachers adapting an innovatory curriculum to fit the constraints (or 'realities') of classroom life.

Decoding the illustrated text

In addressing the pictures of the book, both the Reception and Year One teachers' discourse was weighted towards eliciting moves to reproduce vocabulary items in the

printed text. In this way they provided pupils with an orientation to the more formal decoding of the printed text. While undeniably useful, limitations to the technique were illustrated when the Year One EAL learner failed to come up with the required vocabulary, offering alternatives which were, nevertheless, accurate in describing the picture. Pupils are thus placed in the position of trying to second-guess what is in the teacher's mind, rather than connecting directly with the text themselves. Again, the comparison with 'individualized reading' – in which the *active* pupil works directly with the text, assisted by the *contingently* active teacher – may be evoked.

9.5.3 Perspectives on the Reading process

As the preceding discussion suggests, the three sessions were orientated fairly strongly towards the decoding of the printed word, with limited opportunity for personal responses from the pupils to the stories and their wider themes.

It was in the Reception class that pupils' personal response was most in evidence. As mentioned in Phase One, they engaged with the book's illustrations – and some heated views were expressed regarding the interpretation of these. The teacher allowed space for this and she also related the content of the book to the pupils' own lives – asking such questions as 'do *you* take teddies to bed?'. These were, however, more of an aside to pupils, allowing for simple 'yes'/'no' answers – and there was little or no 'extension' of pupils' responses, or discussion of the book's themes on a more general level.

It was in the Year One session that wider themes brought up by the content of the book were more particularly addressed. There were two instances of the teacher drawing pupils' attention to gender issues – one concerned the term 'firefighters' who, she emphasised, could be 'a man *or* a woman'. The other was in her challenge to a pupil's identification of a woman depicted in one of the illustrations as 'Mum'; the pupil's response was extended by the teacher in her suggestion that in working on the farm, the woman might in fact be 'the farmer'. These issues were presented as 'Teacher informs', though, and there was no further discussion with pupils themselves. However, the discourse of this session did give limited space for pupils' own ideas to surface – as, for example, when they were asked how they thought the cow came to be in the hole.

The Year Two book contained considerable material for discussion, featuring the friendship between two children – a girl in a wheelchair and an able-bodied boy. The more general themes of the book were not addressed, however, and neither were pupils asked to give their own responses to, or ideas about, the book. The teacher's focus of attention was more on ensuring comprehension within the parameters of the printed text itself rather than relating this to wider issues reflected in the book – as the questioning about the meaning of the term 'best friend' illustrates.

Discussion

The eliciting nature of teacher-talk angled, in all three sessions, towards a decoding of the printed text resulted in pupils being passively positioned in terms of generating their own meanings: the texts (ie the printed words) of these graded reading books were, by definition, fairly limited in terms of the articulation of more complex themes and ideas (which were more evident in the illustrations). However, there were variations between the three sessions, with some limited opportunity for personal response in Reception and Year One.

9.5.4 Conclusion and reflection

Given that Guided Reading is regarded as a replacement to the former practice of 'individualized reading', a consideration of the contrast between the two types of practice in terms of the *dynamics* of the sessions would suggest that pupils had an opportunity to be more actively positioned in terms of working on their own understandings in the former practice. As discussed in the exploratory phase of the study (section 4.3), under the Literacy Hour format the roles are somewhat reversed, with the teacher's agenda more to the fore. And this agenda, defined by the NLS as one of imparting decoding skills to pupils, was realised through an eliciting discourse style which left little room for pupils to inject their own relevance into the sessions.

The part of the session when *pupils* are active – reading independently – and the teacher is in a more supporting role were compromised in the observed sessions: in two classes the teacher was absent when pupils were reading and in the third, there appeared to be little time for more than a 'snapshot' view of each pupil as the teacher went around the group. While these sessions did not conform procedurally to that delineated in the NLS,

the 5-minute independent-reading slot allocated by the documents may in itself be considered to allow little time for individual support within a group of 6 pupils.

Reflection on research method

Similar observations may be made as in Chapter 8 regarding the sample and the variety of practice across the three sessions. However, differences were more in terms of the organisation of the sessions and what the teachers chose to focus upon, rather than the particular discourse style employed. There was a greater conformity of discourse style between the three teachers in the Guided Reading sessions with few pupil-initiations – and 'teacher-elicits' and 'teacher-directs' (in which particular pupils were nominated to speak) the main feature of teacher-talk. In these sessions, then, the largely 'IRF' interactions were effectively captured in all three classes by Sinclair & Coulthard's framework, and clear information provided on the balance of teacher-pupil interaction.

Chapter 10

Findings

10.1 Introduction

Chapter 10 draws together the main findings from the previous two chapters and Appendix 5 and discusses these with reference to the research questions and previous studies of teacher-pupil discourse during the Literacy Hour. The findings are then developed into categories of teacher pupil talk, and consideration given to their implications for pupil learning. The research questions considering teacher-pupil talk were:

> What specific ways do teachers interact with their pupils to develop reading; what patterns of verbal interaction can be identified, and how can these be characterised in terms of potential pupil learning? (RQ 2)
>
> What perspectives on the reading process are modelled in these Literacy Hour practices? (RQ 3)

10.2 Main Findings

Patterns of verbal interaction between teachers and pupils

Phase Two of the project has studied patterns of didactic verbal interaction between teachers and pupils during activities to develop reading. Whereas previous studies (Mroz *et al,* 2000; English *et al, 2002*;) have noted a conformity of discourse patterns amongst teachers during the Literacy Hour – featuring short 'teacher-framed' exchanges of low cognitive challenge – the present small scale study found some diversity amongst the three teachers studied.

While the Year Two teacher maintained a consistent discourse style that was in keeping with the teachers in the former studies, the Reception and Year One teachers were found to vary their discourse according to the particular focus of the session. Pupils were drawn actively into a collaborative learning discourse in one of the observed sessions while in

another session pupils' own initiated contributions determined the course of the lesson. During other sessions, the teacher-pupil discourse of all three teachers was made up of an IRF form of 'recall' questioning, in which pupils' initiated comments played little or no part.[1]

Teacher-pupil patterns of verbal interaction in this thus tended to relate more to the findings of research carried out in the pre-NLS era in which it was observed that teachers moved in and out of different discourse styles according to the nature of the learning activity (eg Webster *et al,* 1996). From a social constructivist view of learning, the implications for children's development during these sessions thus tends to vary from session to session, according to the extent to which pupils are *actively* engaged in the 'learning discourse'. For this reason, I decided to consider the findings in terms of differing *categories* of teacher-talk, rather than to attempt to assign particular styles to particular teachers or year groups. These categories are discussed in section **10.3.**

Re-evaluating the 'IRF' sequence?

Contrasting styles of teacher talk between all three classes were noted during Shared Text Work – the segment of the Literacy Hour when teachers model reading strategies *to* pupils. While the Year Two teacher controlled the discourse of the session through an adherence to an IRF eliciting sequence featuring 'recall' questions, in the Reception class the teacher's questions were more 'genuine' and the talk thus took on a more conversational style. In the third class, a discourse which – considered in terms of its linguistic features – appeared highly teacher-controlled, featuring a large number of teacher-elicits, was, however, interpreted as a form of discourse which was particularly facilitating of the active engagement of the pupils.

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[1] It might be insightful here to briefly consider issues of 'observer effect' - and the researcher's position as a former teacher at the school, having worked in partnership with all three teachers in the past. It is possible that these teachers, feeling less under scrutiny than they might should a less familiar researcher from an 'outside' organization be observing them, taught their lessons in a manner that was more in keeping with their usual practice (as they had been requested to do). The 'teacher-framed' IRF form of interaction enables the teacher to maintain control of both the pace and direction of the lesson – and, to a large extent, thereby, its outcomes. Less predictable and thus 'safe' (when under scrutiny) is the risk of involving the 'unknown quantity' of pupil-agenda into this equation.

A brief review in section **7.1.1** of more positive interpretations of the IRF sequence noted its usefulness for monitoring children's learning and highlighting educationally significant knowledge as well as providing, in the third move, an opportunity for the teacher to build upon and extend a pupil's answer. In contrast to these examples, in which pupils are more statically positioned, I would suggest that the present study illustrates the IRF sequence employed in a form which *actively* engages pupils – by incorporating their responses into what is, in effect, a teacher-pupil collaborative learning discourse.

The features of the discourse through which active engagement was achieved were as follows. The responses required of pupils were not 'recall' answers but, being cued by the book illustrations, neither were they completely 'open' either. The pupils' role was to select an appropriate word or phrase with which to construct the story, and in this task they were supported by the teacher's framing question and the picture in the book. The repeated short eliciting form of the IRF sequence itself was an effective mechanism both for involving most of the children in the class and also to build up a sense of atmosphere reflecting the action and suspense of the poem. Pupils were thus supported and engaged, each playing their role in the communal construction of the story. These supportive features may be regarded as particularly helpful to EAL learners since the exercise was concerned with building and extending vocabulary in a highly visible way.

Perspectives on the Reading process

The observations suggested that, within a curriculum innovation which was prescriptive and detailed in terms of both content and delivery, there nevertheless emerged differing views on what it means to be a reader. This was reflected in the practices modelled by the teachers in the three classes.

Observations of Shared Text Work sessions revealed examples of a verbal discourse in two of the classes, in which reading was demonstrated as an interactive process, with the reader's own understandings brought to interpret the text. This was effected in the Reception class through the many pupil-initiated comments that occurred (and which were taken up by the teacher) – and in the Year One class by a dynamic reconstruction of

the story by pupils themselves, supported by the 'frame' of the teacher's eliciting questions. In the Year Two class, where very few pupil-initiated comments occurred, teacher questioning was orientated more strongly towards decoding the print and eliciting factual, bibliographic information. The view of reading thus portrayed is of the text containing its own more static message or 'truths', and rather than engaging actively, the reader is externally positioned as a decoder of this message. The comparatively passive role in which the pupils in this class were placed was compounded by the 'teacher informs' through which their teacher realised reader-response to the book *for* her pupils.

While Shared Text Work *models* the role of the reader to pupils, it is in the Guided Reading session that pupils themselves practise reading. In all three classes an IRF teacher-eliciting mode of interaction was used and there were few pupil initiations. In the two classes in which content was discussed through the pictures, this was largely angled at producing vocabulary needed for a subsequent reading of the print. With the absence in all three classes of the 'Return to the text' segment of the Guided Reading session, there was thus little in the way of reflection on the wider themes of the books. Here, then, in all three classes, 'reading' (decoding the print) was an end in itself rather than a means by which one engages with wider themes and ideas.

10.3 Developing reading: categories of teacher-pupil interactions

This section presents the findings of Phase Two (part one), of the study in terms of categories of teacher-pupil talk. Table 10.1 summarises the features of the discourse taking place during the Shared Text Work section of the Literacy Hour in each class. The features of the form and the content of both teacher-initiated talk and pupil-initiated talk are identified and these set out to show difference across the 3 classes. These categories are then discussed in relation to the model of teacher-pupil roles and literacy related classroom learning developed by Webster *et al* (1996).

Table 10.1 Teacher-pupil talk during Shared Text Work

YEAR 2	YEAR 1	RECEPTION
Features of teacher-initiated talk:	**Features of teacher-initiated talk:**	**Features of teacher-initiated talk:**
Form	***Form***	***Form***
• Ratio of teacher to pupil talk high	• Ratio of teacher to pupil talk weighted towards teacher	• Ratio of teacher to pupil talk fairly evenly weighted
• 'IRF' patterning	• Predominantly 'IRF' patterning	• 'IRF' and 'IRIRF'
• Chaining of questions as series of elicits • Lengthy 'Teacher Informs'	• Chaining of questions as series of elicits • Some uptake of pupil initiations • A few 'Teacher Informs'	• Teacher elicits, broken up by uptake of pupil initiations • 'Teacher Informs'
• Nomination of pupils to speak	• Doesn't always nominate pupils to speak	• Doesn't always nominate pupils to speak
• Brisk pace	• Brisk pace	• Unhurried pace
Content	***Content***	***Content***
• Questions requiring 'recall' answers	• Questions requiring element of choice/interpretation in answer	• More open-ended questions • 'Genuine' questions
• Question-content intrinsic to text	• Question-content mainly intrinsic to text	• Question-content includes link to pupil's experiences
• Feedback moves pursue or praise 'right' answer.	• Feedback moves repeat (confirm) pupil's answer. • Feedback moves assist pupils to further 'shape' their responses	• Feedback moves summarise/extend pupils contributions
• 'Teacher Informs' frame teacher's ideas *for* pupils	• 'Teacher Informs' incorporating pupils' contributions	• 'Teacher Informs' summarise and extend pupils' contributions
Features of pupil-initiated talk:	**Features of pupil-initiated talk:**	**Features of pupil-initiated talk:**
Form	***Form***	***Form***
• Very few/ no pupil-initiations	• Some pupil-initiations	• Many pupil initiations
• 'Pupil Inform' exchange	• Mainly 'Pupil Inform' exchanges	• 'Pupil Inform' & 'Pupil Elicit' exchanges
Content	***Content***	***Content***
• Relates to topic of teacher's questioning	• Pupils' own observations about the text • Some linking with personal experience	• Pupils' own observations about the text • Link with personal experience • Pupils exchange views

10.3.1 Literacy Hour interactions within a framework of adult-child proximation

In outlining the features of teacher-pupil talk during the Shared Text Work sessions of three individual Literacy Hours, the table may be seen as containing a relevance that is limited to the confines of the particular sessions that it describes. However, I would suggest that the prevailing characteristics illustrated are coherent with the range represented in the framework of adult-child proximation developed by Reed *et al* (1996) reproduced in section **6.3.3.** The term 'adult-child proximation' was coined by the authors 'to refer to those instances where adults enter into close exchanges with children where information is handed over, explanations are given, and events are interpreted...this is what we mean by mediation: helping children to construct accounts of events in terms they understand...adult-child proximation is examined in the nature and quality of interactions, such as conversation' (Webster *et al* 1996:27-28). Their framework, developed as a way of looking at teachers' practice and gauging relative emphasis (rather than as a precision instrument), was intended to identify predominant kinds of teaching and learning styles, how they overlap or emerge and the possible consequences for pupils' experience of literacy.

The findings of the present study, viewed through the 'lens' of the Framework model, might place the Focused Word Work sessions of all three classes within the 'teacher-driven', 'low learner-initiative' quadrant A – focusing, as they do, on the 'rehearsal' of literacy 'skills'. The three Shared Text Work sessions, on the other hand, tend to distribute between quadrants A, D and C. The Shared Text Work session of Year Two contains much in common with quadrant A, being teacher structured with frequent reinforcement and made up of un-negotiated learning through prescribed steps: literacy viewed in terms of 'a set of skills to be handed over'. The dynamic Year One session might be viewed as having more in common with the 'dialogic literacy' quadrant D, in which teachers guide and children are seen as active partners. The Reception class session has features in common with the 'immersed literacy' quadrant C, which features high learner-initiative and a context which is personal; however, there is a higher profile teacher-role in this class, which would be more in keeping with quadrant D.

The role of the reader illustrated by practice in both Year One and Reception Shared Reading sessions would be in line with quadrant C, in which 'active construction of meaning from text' is emphasised. There was, as discussed in both the exploratory Phase One and in Phase Two of the study, little evidence of 'readers reflect[ing] and review[ing]' texts – (quadrant D) in any of the classes.

The Guided Reading sessions, as portrayed in the NLS documents themselves, might be viewed as being positioned between quadrants A and D, since teacher and pupils play different roles according to the stage of the session. However, as the prescribed format was not followed during the observed sessions of the present study, all three sessions were weighted towards the low child-initiative, teacher-structured practice described by quadrant A – but with some features of quadrant B (pupils working unassisted while reading, for example).

Summary

In portraying the Shared Text Work sessions as distributing across the range of the quadrants, Table 10.1 may be seen as illustrating (in emphasis) the range of interaction styles through which teachers may promote reading development with pupils during the Literacy Hour. Table 10.2 in the following section summarises these categories and links them to particular views of the activity of 'reading'.

10.3.2 Characterising teacher-pupil interactions and the development of reading

In Table 10.2 (below) I have abstracted the features of the teacher-pupil interactions from Table 10.1 and incorporated each within a particular framework of teacher-pupil proximation, highlighting the roles played by teachers and pupils and the messages thus modelled to pupils through these practices regarding the activity of reading. The title headings characterise each category in terms of the relative activity of teachers and pupils, as discussed in the above section. The form that each type of talk thus takes – in terms of teacher-pupil interactions – is illustrated in the middle sections of the table. Examples of talk between teachers and pupils that inform the three categories have been taken from data collected during the recordings of the three Literacy Hour 'weeks', and is set out in the following section **10.3.3**.

Table 10.2. Categories of teacher-pupil interactions characterising reading development during Literacy Hour Shared and Guided Reading sessions.

	Teacher-framed	**Collaborative**	**Pupil-framed**
Relative positioning of teachers and pupils	Teacher – active Pupils – passive	Teacher – active Pupils – active	Teacher – contingently active Pupils – active
Role played by teacher ..... *Realisation of teacher's role in features of practice*	***Determining*** [Directs pupil contributions] ..... • 'Recall' questioning intrinsic to text • 'Feedback' moves praise/pursue correct answer • 'Teacher informs' frame teacher's own ideas *for* pupils	***Guiding*** [Guides pupil contributions] ..... • Questions requiring element of choice or interpretation: text focused • 'Feedback' moves confirm or further shape pupils' responses • 'Teacher informs' incorporate pupils' contributions	***Facilitating*** [Picks up pupil initiations] ..... • Open-ended / 'genuine' questions: text/pupil focused • 'Feedback' moves summarise/extend pupils' contributions • 'Teacher informs' elucidate text; link with pupils' contributions
Pupil-initiating roles	• Occasional 'Pupil inform' exchange • Relates to topic of teacher-questioning	• Some (mainly) 'Pupil inform' exchanges • Pupils' own observations about text, some linking with personal experiences	• Many 'Pupil elicit' & 'Pupil inform' exchanges • Pupils' own observations about text; links with personal experience • Pupils exchange views
Role of the 'reader' that is thus modelled	External to the text. Reader decodes 'message' contained within the printed word.	Interacts with the (meanings of) text. Reader reconstructs text drawing on own understandings.	Interprets text in light of own experiences and understandings

10.3.3 Categories illustrated in examples of teacher-pupil interactions

This section gives examples of teacher-pupil talk within the three categories and indicates how the teacher's moves link to a particular category. The examples are sequenced to reflect the different stages of Shared and Guided Reading sessions as laid out in '*Module 4*': engaging with the illustrations, reading the printed text and reflecting upon the text

Teacher-framed: 'determining' teacher role

Extract 10.1 Orientating to text: engaging with the illustrations

1	T	Now, if I take the words away, cover up the words, I'm sure you can tell me what the book's about. Who can tell me something that that page tells you – some information it gives you? What does that page tell you?	• T/P interactions closely linked to pictures – helpful for keeping EAL learners focused. • T's repetition feedback moves (turns 3,6,8 and 12) provide useful recap of vocabulary for EAL learners. • P's to 'unlock' existing meanings rather than to bring own ideas to interpret the pictures: message modelled to P's is thus that pictures hold (static) meaning independent of the reader. • Print holds the text's 'correct' meaning (Turn 12); purpose of pictures is to help reader discover this.
2	P	That he's got big house.	
3	T	It says he's got a big house does it? Right.	
4	T	What else does it say?	
5	P	He had big windows.	
6	T	There were big windows on his house.	
7	P	And big door.	
8	T	A big door.	
9	P	And – and he's going to park.	
10	T	O.K. lets see if you're right. Let's read it together.	
11	T	*[T and P's read the written text together]*	
12	T	You were right! That's exactly what you told me – he's a giant – a very big giant; he lived in a big house, said Mark; you told me that there were windows and door. Mandy told me that one day he went to the park. Well done!	

1	T	What's a 'giant', Corey? What's a giant? So you're thinking really hard. What's a giant, Keiron?	• T 'recall' questioning intrinsic to text • Feedback move pursuing desired answer; alternative response 'tall' (turn 4) not taken up • Teacher gives own examples rather than seek pupils' ideas. • 'Teacher inform' (turn 5) provides useful vocabulary for EAL learners
2	P	Big giant people.	
3	T	Yes – 'big'. You've used the right word, 'big'.	
4	T	Tell me more about giants, Sara.	
5	P	Um – there's a very, very tall person.	
6	T	Yes, 'giant' is very, very big. You say, 'gosh, that's a giant shoe!' – it's a very big shoe. Or, 'that's a giant ice-cream!' – very big. And a giant is a person in a story.	

Extract 10.2 Reading the print

1	T	Let's read it together	• Emphasis on accurate reading of print (repetition, turn 3) and checking P's decoding knowledge (turn 5) interrupts flow of reading and thus meaning. Possible loss of focus for EAL learners.
2	P	'Next Mr Big saw a slide *[hesitantly]*	
3	T	Let's read the sentence together – again.	
4	Ps	'Next Mr Big saw a slide.'	
5	T	What does 'slide' begin with, Samina? Can you give me the other sound that comes after 'S' – 'slide', 'slide', 'slide' – what does 'slide' begin with? Donna, what does 'slide' begin with? I asked you, Mandy – what does it begin with? 'sss' Can you say it again, loudly?	

Extract 10.3 Reflecting on the text

1	T	Fire- we – we call them – the people that put out fires – instead of calling them the 'fireman' or 'firewoman', we can say that they are 'firefighters'.	• Rather than actively involving P's with this theme brought up by the book, T uses a 'T. inform' move to relay information to them. This models a passive stance to P's.
2	T	Can you say that?	
3	Ps	Firefighters.	
4	T	Because ( ) they're doing is they're *fighting* the fire, aren't they? If somebody has to put out a fire, they have to *fight* the fire so they call them – a 'firefighter'.	
5	P	I know why – I know why ( ) they go inside and they ( ).	
6	T	That's right, that's right – and it might be a man *or* a woman mightn't it? A lady or a man.	

Collaborative: 'guiding' teacher role

Extract 10.4 Orientating to text: engaging with the illustrations

1	T	Let's have a look at page 4.	• T's questions are open-ended (e.g. turn 1,7) and require element of pupil-choice in answer. • T's questions orientate pupils to vocabulary of printed text. • T links reconstruction of text to pupils' own experiences (turns 3,7,9)
2	T	Right, Jamie – would you like to tell me about the picture first of all?	
3	P	Um – getting his doll and teddy.	
4	T	Right – he's getting his doll and his teddy.	
5	T	What's he wearing, Lee?	
6	P	Pyjamas	
7	T	His pyjamas.	
8	T	So where is he… where might he be going if he's wearing his pyjamas?	
9	P	To bed	
10	T	To his – to his bed.	
11	T	And do you think – he's taking a teddy with him?	
12	P	Yes.	
13	P's	Do you take teddies to bed? Yes Yes Yes I don't take no teddy to my bed!	
14	T	So can you guess what this sentence might say?	

Extract 10.5 Reading the print

1	T	Now yesterday we started a new big book – thought about it together, we looked at the title, the picture. I'm sure we remember the title.	• Decoding the print. Modelled as reader operating actively ('detective' exercise to discover the words), rather than simple recall of words. • P draws on own established understandings (turn 4) • T's feedback moves build upon pupil responses and scaffold further pupil responses, rather than judge them. • Joint pupil exercise enables EAL learners to participate successfully at own level.
2	T	What's it called, Nalia?	
3	P	**Mr Big –**	
4	T	That's *part* of the title. Can you carry on, Sara?	
5	P	Went to the park.	
6	T	Well it does *mean* that Mr Big went to the park, but it doesn't actually say that – the words don't actually say that – they do *mean* it, but you've got one word wrong.	
7	T	Hala, can you read it if I point?	
8	P	**Mr Big going –**	
9	T	Good, well it does begin with 'guh' – Mr Big –	
10	P	**Going**	
11	T	Begins with 'guh'. At the end – what letter can you see at the end?	
12	P	**'S'**	
13	T	Makes the sound – 'sss'. So it's got to end in 's'. Can you help?	
14	T	Danielle?	
15	P	Goes	
16	T	'Goes', isn't it? There's 'go' *[pointing to print]* – 'Mr Big' – and we can't say 'Mr Big go to the Park.' So it's got 'Mr Big *goes* to the Park'.	

Extract 10.6 Reflecting on the text

1	T	I wonder what else he could be thinking...this poor mouse chased all the way across the field by a cat and a dog who're really angry. What could he be thinking? Serena?	• T asks initial open-ended question; P's need to have been engaging with the previous discourse in order to answer it. • P's active engagement evidenced by numbers of P's volunteering answers. • T feedback moves are both confirming and shaping of pupils' responses (e g. turns 3,6,13).
2	P	**He's thinking 'I'm not going to do it again'.**	
3	T	'I'm not going to do *that* again!' Good idea.	
4	T	Freddie?	
5	P	Um – he might be saying '*Stop!*'	
6	T	He might be saying 'Stop! Stop that cat!' Good idea.	
7	P	I know!	
8	T	Ella?	
9	P	Um – I – I – 'I wish I could trick those lousy animals!'	
10	T	That's an excellent idea! 'I wish I could trick those lousy animals!'	
11	T	Rhiannon?	
12	P	'Eeek!'	
13	T	'Eeek!' Yes, that would be a good word – and quite a cartoony word, isn't it – 'eeek!'	
14	T	Sarah?	
15	P	Um – ['I wish they wouldn't chase me no more!'	
16	P	['Help me!' 'Help me!'	
17	T	Pardon? Can't hear you – can't hear Sarah. I still can't hear her!	
18	P	'I wish I – ' 'I wish they didn't chase me no more!'	
19	T	'I wish they wouldn't chase me any more!' Excellent!	
20	T	Hands down. Hands down. Good ideas.	

Pupil-Framed: 'facilitating' teacher role

Extract 10.7 Orientating to text: engaging with the illustrations

1	P	If you want glass on the floor, man – if you take your shoes off – you – um – your feet will get blood on your shoes.	• Pupil-initiated • P's relate to own experience • T's feedback (turn 2) links P's more personal comment back to the action of the story and provides a model of language which opens the way for EAL learner's comment • T's confirming comments give feel of equal status to P's contributions.
2	T	Mmm, they're trying to be ever so careful, aren't they?	
3	P	**So they have to have their slippers on.**	
4	T	They do.	

1	P	My dog do like that!	• Pupil-initiated • Relating to own experience • T's feedback (turn 2) provides recast of pupil utterance into standard form • T's feedback (turn 4) uses P's response to extend vocabulary. • Take-up of topic by T prompts other pupils to contribute.
2	T	Your dog does that, does he? What does it – what does your dog do?	
3	P	Um – put (poke?) his teeth out.	
4	T	One tooth comes out – right, cos they've got long [pointy teeth sometimes, haven't they?	
5	P	[have babies!	
6	P	Yeah, my dog ( ).	

Extract 10.8 Reading the print

		[T and P's are trying to work out the title of their book]	
1	T	So can anybody guess what that word might be? Halina?	• P initiation (turn 4) bringing prior knowledge to bear on the problem – 'Tidy-up time' a familiar teacher/parent direction to children.
2	P	( )	
3	T	'Time' – well done!	
4	P	'Tidy-up time.'	
5	T	Could be 'Tidy-up time' – it says 'time'.	• T's feedback move accepts pupil's suggestion as a possibility, pointing out the common word 'time'.
6	T	Put your finger on the second word.	
7	T	What does it begin with?	

Extract 10.9 Reflecting on the text

1	T	Why does Laura think this is a *boy's* story? *[referring to a character in the story]*	• T's questions are open-ended/'genuine'
2	P	Cos – um – girls don't like boys' stories.	
3	T	So – what's a boy's story, Liam?	• Content links with P's personal interests
4	P	Um – about – um –	
5	P	Dinosaurs.	
6	T	Right – 'dinosaurs', Lena said. Would that be a 'boy's story'?	• T remains 'neutral', collating pupils' ideas and referring back to class for their opinion
7	P	Yeah, and ( ).	
8	T	What about girls' stories, Laura? What would be a girl's story?	
9	P	Um – about angels.	
10	T	About angels or cinderella	

10.3.4 Discussion

This section has developed and illustrated categories of teacher-pupil talk arising, initially, out of observed Shared Text Work sessions. While each teacher's style adhered in emphasis to a particular category, the discourse style adopted depended also upon the nature of the activity engaged upon: all teachers used the 'Teacher-framed' category for their Focused Word Work sessions, for example. The categories themselves, then, may be seen as denoting of the 'flavour' and emphases of the contrasting talk, rather than definitively encapsulating particular teachers' practice.

While the 'Teacher-framed' category does illustrate a more distinctive and long-recognised form of classroom discourse, the 'Collaborative' and 'Pupil-framed' categories can be viewed more in tandem with each other. Both foreground the activity of the pupil in the learning discourse, with teachers providing enabling/scaffolding moves to further develop understandings. The distinction between the two is in the nature of the teacher's activity: in the more dynamic 'Collaborative' category it helps to shape pupil-contributions as they occur, while in the more reflective Pupil-framed category there is

more of a summarising and extending function to the talk. The Pupil-framed teacher talk shares some features with (what the NLS terms) 'individualised reading' – replaced by Guided Reading in the Literacy Hour format. In these one-to-one sessions the pupil takes the lead, with the teacher introducing scaffolding moves when required; she is thus *contingently* active.

The 'Collaborative' category, then, represents a hybrid between the Teacher-framed/whole class and the Pupil-framed/individualised teaching, which might be seen as characterising pre-NLS teaching practices with regard to reading development. The teacher is active and eliciting, as in the Teacher-framed category, but through her interactions creates a framework in which pupils' own contributions can be shaped and extended while contributing to a collaboratively inclusive discourse.

10.4 Implications for pupil development

Research Question 2, in enquiring into the patterns of verbal interaction between teachers and pupils to develop reading, asks how these may be characterised in terms of learning. How, more particularly, then, do the 3 categories relate to potential pupil learning?

10.4.1 'Teacher-framed' reading discourse

The 'Teacher-framed' discourse is characterised by a passive pupil-positioning in which 'recall' questions angled towards a decoding of the printed text feature prominently. In terms of content, then, it may be seen as being consistent with the NLS directive that 'the teacher's first priority *must* be to teach...decoding skills as rapidly as possible' (*Module 4*, p 5). As such, the Teacher-framed category is weighted towards 'bottom-up' theories of reading development focusing upon the mastery of specific (mechanical) skills in sequence, and through the acquisition of which, 'reading' as a meaning-making activity develops. The pupil may therefore be seen as doubly passive: she receives, and has to orientate herself towards answering teacher-framed 'recall' questions and, in relation to the text itself and the meanings contained within it, she is externally positioned, rather than dynamically engaged. The 'Teacher-framed' discourse thus diverges from the social constructivist view of dialogue and learning, in which classroom discourse is not considered effective unless pupils play an active role in their learning.

With regard to the needs of EAL learners, Hall (1995) and others have alluded to the 'phenomena frequently observed' of pupils who, while appearing to read with fluency, have little understanding of what they have read. When the focus is primarily upon print-decoding skills rather than engagement with meaning, it might be suggested that such a phenomenon may be the consequence. Examples in the present study have shown that this is not confined to EAL learners but can affect all developing readers: pupils decode the print without fully engaging with its meaning, and in the face of teacher-eliciting questions, are unable to supply the required answer. More generally on the needs of EAL learners, Gibbons (2000) critiques the use of IRF 'recall' questioning which, she says, deprives learners of many factors that are most enabling of better language learning – the negotiation of meaning that occurs in ongoing dialogic talk: pupils need opportunities for 'stretched' language, when the learner is pushed to the outer limits of what she is able to say, beyond the 'comfort zone'.

10.4.2 'Pupil-framed' reading discourse

This discourse, featuring pupils active in initiating moves and with these contributions playing a role in determining the direction of the discourse, positions the teacher as contingently active – in clarifying, summarising and extending pupil contributions, and employing a more open-ended/'genuine' questioning form. This can result in lengthened exchanges and the talk taking on a more 'conversational' form. In giving space for pupils' own initiated contributions to emerge, the teacher facilitates a constructivist approach to learning in which pupils engage actively with the text; for young learners in particular this will tend to be characterised by linking the text and its meanings to their personal experiences. In picking up and extending subject matter provided by pupils themselves, teacher scaffolding moves have a greater potential to take place within the ZPD, and thus be more effectively internalised by pupils. Thus it is in this discourse that the third 'concept' of social constructivist practice, 'appropriation', in the form of reciprocally adjusted teaching (informed by orientating towards pupils' perspectives and responses) will be most likely to occur (section **6.2.1**).

In the whole class or group teaching format by which literacy is developed under the NLS, however, (while there may be advantages in the potentially inhibiting spotlight *not*

falling exclusively upon the individual child) the ability of the teacher herself to remain effectively contingent to the learning needs of all simultaneously may be questioned. The lower control exercised by the teacher thus has implications for pupil involvement in communal learning sessions. With more confident pupils contributing at (relative) length and to their own agenda, the teacher has fewer opportunities to bring more reticent pupils into the discourse. EAL learners may be particularly disadvantaged here, when more discursive interchanges which are not anchored closely and visibly to the text itself predominate.

Whereas Teacher-framed discourse is associated with a 'bottom-up' approach to reading development, the Pupil-framed discourse, in foregrounding pupil responses, has more in common with 'top-down' approaches that stress the importance of the knowledge that the reader brings to the text in search of meaning. 'Top' is thus *meaning* – a sense of the text itself, the story form and the ideas contained within it being used to work down to a reading of individual words with increasing accuracy based primarily on expectations of what would follow in the story and sentence. In these psycholinguistic models,

> *Learning to read is finding a meaningfulness in print that is rooted in students' experience and grows through students' engagement in texts that are ends in themselves rather than exercises in improved performance.*
>
> (Willinsky 1990:68)

Such 'engagement' features prominently in the examples of Pupil-framed discourse given in Phase 2 of the present study. (As noted previously, however, subsequent segments of these Literacy Hour sessions reverted to a more 'bottom-up' approach.)

10.4.3 'Collaborative' reading discourse

As illustrated in section 8.3, both teacher and pupils are active here, the teacher guiding the discourse with questions requiring pupils to exercise choice or interpretation in their responses. Rather than rehearsing a previously constructed 'script' or discursively creating their own version, teachers and pupils interact dynamically with meanings within the text. Meanings are thus created within the framework of the text itself – effected through the particular responses of pupils, along with the teacher's shaping and extension

of these in her feedback moves and incorporation of them into her 'Teacher inform' moves.

By *orchestrating* the discourse by means of her eliciting questions, the teacher can ensure more equal participation by pupils than occurs in the 'Pupil-framed' discourse and can use her knowledge of individual children's needs to frame an appropriate level of challenge for them. She thereby facilitates the inclusion of EAL learners, who are thus enabled to play a part alongside their peers in the communal learning process.

Reading development in the 'Collaborative' category might be described as a 'managed' form of the 'top-down' approach – with the initial focus still being upon the construction of meaning rather than on the *skills* of reading, and with pupils given the opportunity to build in their own interpretation of text within the more communal framework established by the teacher. Absent from this more dynamic interaction and construction and reconstruction of text, however, may be consideration and reflection upon the larger meanings and messages of the text itself, and the reader's own positioning within these bigger ideas.

Whereas the 'Teacher-framed' discourse approximates to the NLS in terms of attention to the stated *content,* the 'Collaborative' discourse most closely matches the NLS aspiration regarding the interactive *form* of teacher-pupil talk, pupil contributions being encouraged, expected and extended and with their understanding being probed.

10.5 The wider perspective

The first part of Phase Two of the study, informed by a social constructivist frame, has explored ways in which understandings about reading are being constructed through verbal interactions between teacher and pupils within the shared social contexts of the Literacy Hour. As such, this part of the study may be considered broadly within the context of other studies on reading published during the past decade which, adopting a broadly similar sociocultural stance, view texts, readers and contexts as inseparable from each other and also from the wider contexts in which they are enacted. Researchers have looked at, for example, the ways in which instructional practices enacted by the teacher

serve to set the agenda for a class, guiding not only how students respond, but also how they read (Many & Wiseman, 1992; O'Flahavan, 1989; Raphael & McMahon, 1994: all quoted in Galda & Beach, 2001). Fish (1980) described how the interpretative community in which readers were positioned shaped the strategies of individual readers, and Hickman (1981) documented the influence of classroom context, particularly teacher-practice, on response. Considerations such as these are not the immediate focus of the present study; however, in attempting to account for variety in practice within a single school, there will be a number of factors in a teacher's own 'history' – both in and out of school – that will influence her conception of the nature of learning and literacy and how this is to be managed within the constraints of a busy classroom. I have made some small reference to these in, for example, referring to the looming pressures of the SATs tests upon the Year Two teacher.

10.5.1 The NLS and EAL learners

Both Shared and Guided Literacy Hour reading practices place EAL learners firmly within the context of their wider social group and, thereby, offer the potential to engage in social shared thinking – both with teacher and peers.

The significance of illustrations

I would suggest that at Key Stage 1, when formal reading skills are still developing, the communal 'reading the pictures' of the book may be regarded as the primary activity through which this shared thinking may be facilitated, offering an inclusive forum whereby all pupils, whatever their formal reading ability, have the opportunity to participate on a more or less equal footing. The examples in this chapter have illustrated ways in which this might occur and be developed by teachers. In the early years of school, the illustrations to the books used to develop literacy form an integral part of the teaching programme in orientating pupils towards the written text, as Gibbons (1991) and Hudelson (1994) illustrate – and instructions for their use are explicitly referred to in the NLS teaching directives. In addition, for early readers, the pictures can in themselves provide an especially rich site for meaning making, as Datta (2000) has argued – and indeed, in many 'classic' children's books, the complexity of the book's theme is often

carried within these rather than by a relatively simplistic written text – as Meek (1988) illustrates.

The distinction between the emphasis on the use of pictures as precursor to a decoding of the print of the text and a view which would see these as rich sites for interactive exploration in their own right has been discussed in the present study – with the 'Teacher-framed' discourse linking more with the former view and the 'Collaborative' and 'Pupil-framed' discourse towards the latter.

Modelling reading practices

The NLS introduces into its Shared Reading component the notion of the teacher *modelling* reading strategies to pupils (*Framework* p 12). I have suggested, in the analysis of teacher-pupil discourse in the present study, that in the course of this, the teacher also models (or facilitates) wider reading behaviours concerning the place of the reader in relation to the text itself – and that for young learners these behaviours are articulated through both the form and the content of the teacher-pupil discourse relating, particularly, to the book illustrations. Thus 'children (and their teacher) together construct their own implicit definition of literary competence...within the constraints and opportunities of their interpretive community...' (Sipe, 2001: 260).

Rogoff's metaphor of 'apprenticeship' to describe children's cognitive development through 'guided participation' might also be evoked in connection with Shared Text Work. Here, the novice works with an expert in joint activities within the ZPD. Thus for the EAL learner (as for other children) guided participation occurs in social activity with companions who support and stretch children's understanding. Rogoff's extended ZPD also includes development that comes about tacitly and in situations lacking intentionality between teachers and learners; I would suggest that the modelling of reading behaviour along with the visual prompt of the book's pictures offers possibilities for meaning making on a more individual, private level for those children who are not, perhaps, interacting directly with the teacher, but are nevertheless part of the group.

From the wider sociocultural perspective, pupils will 'learn to respond to literature as they acquire various social practices, identities and tools...through *experience in acquiring* social practices and tools and in constructing identities within specific cultural worlds' (Galda & Beach, 2001: 67; my emphasis). The present research, as summarised in **Table 10.2**, suggests that within an imposed framework of unprecedented prescription, there yet remains, in the micro-detail of teacher-pupil interactions, a diversity of teaching practice reflecting very different models of reading development. These have potential implications for both the strategies children learn to approach the more formal decoding aspects of reading and also the attitudes that they develop towards reading as an activity and their personal role as a reader.

10.6 Endnote: the remainder of the Literacy Hour 'weeks'

As mentioned in section **7.3.1**, the recorded Literacy Hour 'weeks' provided additional information to that of the exploratory study on how teachers structured Shared Text Work sessions and how the enlarged texts were used. This is reported below.

As observed in the exploratory study, the Year Two class proceeded through the book on successive days until, by the end of the week, the whole text had been read. Each session began with a re-reading and recapping of the book from the beginning until the next unread page was reached. Pupils were then questioned about the new picture, as a precursor to reading the printed text. Following the reading, the teacher checked pupil's comprehension.

Following the recreation of the story on the first day of the week, the Year One teacher read the printed text to the children, pointing to the words with a pen (Day 2). She paused half way through, asking pupils to predict what would happen next and following some discussion of this, continued reading to the end of the book. Pupils were then asked comprehension questions on the story. On the third day, the teacher read the story while pupils were asked to signal when they heard rhyming words. Not all the book was read, and teacher and pupils then went on to play a class game on rhyming words. On the final day, the teacher read the book, inviting pupils to join in with her; reading stopped before the end and pupils were then asked to supply alternative endings to the story.

In the Reception class, the remainder of the 'week' was spent on a Shared Writing activity, with pupils using the pictures as a prompt to make up their own version of the story – the teacher acting as scribe and collating and orientating the sessions through eliciting questions and summarising comments.

Thus, as in the exploratory study, the books were not used for *sustained* 'shared reading' by teachers and pupils, and the observations summarised in section **5.2** regarding this would also apply here. (Again, too, in the Reception class, the text itself was too long and difficult for pupils to have been able to join in with the reading.)

Chapter summary

Chapter 10 has drawn together the findings from the first part of Phase Two of the research, summarised and developed these in terms of categories of teacher-pupil verbal interaction, and given illustrations of the different patterns of talk. These have been considered both in terms of the NLS and potential pupil learning in its own right. The second part of Phase Two of the research, which follows in the next chapter, considers the naturally occurring talk that children engage in when the teacher is absent.

Chapter 11

Exploring pupil peer-group discourse

11.1 Introduction

In the exploratory Phase One stage of the study it was proposed that informal talk between pupils during the unaided group work segment of the Literacy Hour might be regarded as having a role to play in their literacy development, thus constituting an alternative or additional site for learning. Chapter 11 expands on, and further defines, these findings – exploring examples of such talk during Literacy Hours in terms of its potential for development.

The section below positions this part of the study in relation to existing studies reporting on similar talk, and establishes a broad framework in which to consider the children's talk. This is followed by an exploration of four contrasting samples of recorded peer group talk.

11.2 Studies of informal peer group talk

Studies of pupil-pupil talk within classroom settings have concentrated mainly upon that generated by small groups set up for the purpose of producing collaborative activity between pupils (e.g. Haworth, 1999; Wegerif & Mercer, 1997; Bennett & Cass, 1989; Barnes & Todd, 1977). In contrast to such studies – in which the focus is upon the kinds of talk effective in promoting curriculum knowledge and understanding – there have been few investigations into children's own undirected informal talk.

Maybin (1994), however, researched middle-school pupils' informal talk, using a 'dialogic' model, emerging from the writings of Vygotsky, Bakhtin and Volosinov to look at the structure and purposes of the talk in relation to the children's construction of meaning and understanding. Her research discovered highly collaborative talk in which meanings were interactionally constructed between pupils rather than individually

generated, with children completing each others' utterances, repeating what others had said, echoing the voice of the teacher or of a text they had been reading and using reported speech in relating incidents or anecdotes. Social and cognitive aspects of talk were found to be closely integrated with multi-functional utterances serving a number of different cognitive and social purposes simultaneously. Maybin also noted how the meanings and knowledge which children jointly negotiated and constructed were provisional and frequently contested and that, associated with this provisionality, there was often an ambiguity in individual utterances – 'out of a range of possible meanings it is the respondent, not the speaker, who chooses a particular interpretation, which may then in its turn be reinterpreted or subverted' (p 148).

Maybin's study draws attention to the ways in which language use positions the speaker and develops personal identity as well as making meaning. Features of this 'richness of ...resource which all children have at their disposal' (p 149), were apparent in children's peer interactions recorded during the present study. However, within the closely structured context of Literacy Hour sessions, the talk was found often to link to the tasks to which the children had been assigned. A study which parallels this aspect of classroom activity is Dyson's research into young children's spontaneous 'off task' talk while writing stories (1994).

Examining this informal talk between pupils, Dyson found that their comments on each other's work – creating and critiquing 'imaginary worlds' – and their use of each other as an audience helped to shape individual story development. Her study thus offered evidence that children's cognitive functions develop first in a social, interpersonal context and are then internalised at individual level:

> *Given tasks worth talking about and the right to talk, children's interactions can contribute substantially to intellectual development in general and literacy growth in particular.*
>
> (*ibid*, p 203)

Dyson's research, focusing on the *relevance* of talk to ongoing activity, initially drew a distinction between talk which was considered to be 'task involved' and that which was 'non-task involved'. Analysis of data, however, led her to modify this distinction to

include new coding categories of 'other's task involved' – children entering the task or imaginary world of a peer; and 'task related' – in which there was a less direct, but nevertheless related, link between the task and the imaginary worlds that the children's talk was creating. In this latter category, for example, a picture of a child's mother as a teenager led to a discussion of teenage mothers. As the project continued over time, Dyson discovered that talk within these categories, which she characterised as 'the rich and noisy talk of the peer group', was often transformed into the imaginary text worlds which children individually constructed in their writing.

Dyson's research was carried out with children of similar age (5-7yrs) to those in the present study, and a further similarity was the curriculum area of literacy and writing activities with which the children were engaged. Writing activities during the relatively short group work sessions of the Literacy Hour, however, related mostly to 'word-level' activities – completing phonic work sheets, for example, and there were few observed sessions calling on children to enter into or create 'imaginary worlds'. Nevertheless, a range of activities was observed and a theme arising concerned the *character* of the talk in relation to the type of activity (or 'task') with which children were engaged.

Features of children's informal peer group talk noted during observations in the exploratory phase of the present study (section **4.2.2**) thus share characteristics described in the studies by Maybin and Dyson, in which an intertwining of the social and cognitive aspects of children's lives and development is indicated. These illustrate how the social world of classroom relationships can enhance more 'formal' aspects of learning – in Dyson's words, 'the social life of the children energized rather than interfered with the academic curriculum' (p 220). Both these studies thus provided useful standpoints from which to consider the children's conversations taking place during the Literacy Hour group work sessions.

EAL learners

With research (in studies concerning both first and second language acquisition) emphasising the notion of language *use* as a major principle for language development, an 'interactive' classroom in which children need to use language in interaction with

other children and adults is essential if they are to develop language competence and achieve their potential at school (Gibbons, 1991). While the NLS emphasises interaction – particularly between teacher and pupil, the present study found EAL learners rarely initiating comments or ideas during these sessions. It was also observed that when teachers specifically addressed EAL learners, their responses tended to be brief – often confined to one or two words. Furthermore, it has been suggested that the curriculum agenda and the format of the Literacy Hour, with its time-constrained segments, leaves teachers little time to develop more extended interactions with pupils, during which EAL learners' language needs might be addressed. Related to this latter point, research by Wong Fillmore (1982) may be cited.

Wong Fillmore demonstrated the importance in effective second language 'input' of the interaction between teaching style and the peer composition of the classroom. Comparing young children's second language acquisition in US classrooms, she found that in classes containing mixed second language learners and native speaking children, the optimal environment was a less teacher-directed, more open and informal organisation, where second language learners received input from the teacher *and* from native speaking children. This was explained by the observation that when the *teacher* controlled the input, this tended to be at the level of the native speakers rather than at a comprehensible level for second language learners.

The unsupervised group work sessions of the Literacy Hour, then, may be regarded as offering EAL learners an additional forum for interactive participation, and thus language development, to that of the teacher-directed sessions. The exploratory phase observations of the present study, noting the active participation of EAL learners in group discourse at such times, would add weight to this proposal.

11.3 Approach to exploring the talk

Van Lier (1998) has observed what he terms the 'pedagogical moments' (or 'learning opportunities') that 'our interactions with others constantly provide' in many different settings – both in and out of the classroom. This epithet seemed to suit the character of the episodes captured on audio-recordings during the present study – which were

unplanned-for, fleeting and unpredictable in outcome. Rather than attempting to encapsulate such disparate samples of talk within detailed coding and categorising procedures, the episodes are interpreted individually. They are discussed within the broad framework established by Maybin and Dyson's research in the above section, and in relation to the questions arising from the exploratory stage of the present study – these informing the research questions below.

The data

The episodes are taken from group work segments of Literacy Hours and were captured during audio-recordings of Literacy Hours during both phases of the study. While a number of such conversations appeared on the recordings, the four discussed here were selected to show the variety of ways in which the talk linked to the task with which the children were engaged. (The data collection procedures have been described in section **3.1**.)

Questions arising from the exploratory phase

Observations of children's informal talk during the first stage of the study suggested that these may represent alternative 'sites' for learning. I was interested in the following aspects of the talk, which form points for consideration in the present chapter.

Main research question:

What are the features of children's peer group talk during Independent Work and how can this talk be characterised in terms of potential pupil learning? (RQ 4)

Focusing research questions:

What are the circumstances of the talk – how did it arise and how does it relate (if at all) to Literacy Hour activities? (RQ 4a)

In what ways does the talk relate to the 'task'

- Sparked off by task.
- Linked to getting the task completed.
- Accompanying the task
- Tenuously or not directly related (RQ 4b)

What do children collaboratively achieve through their talk? (RQ 4c)

What part do EAL learners play? (RQ 4d)

11.4 Pupil-pupil discourses during the Literacy Hour

This section discusses the four samples of contrasting talk between children.

11.4.1 Episode 1: *'Poison Food'*

This topic of conversation arose while the children were engaged in drawing pictures and writing about their favourite part of the *Little Red Riding Hood* story – the 'big book' studied during the preceding Shared Text Work. The group (Year Two) contains six children, two of whom were EAL learners. David is the only boy in the group. In this conversation, children explore the issue of 'poison food' – their discussion sparked off by the set task of drawing a picture. Although their deliberations do not connect directly with the task itself, observation notes indicated that they continued drawing and colouring their pictures as they talked; they thus remained in a sense 'on task'.

1	Kate	Poppies! I done poppies! *[referring to her drawing]*
2	Selena	Guess what, you ( ) yellow poppies, you have!
3	**David**	**I've seen [ye( )**
4	Ella	[Yellow poppies ain't poison. Not all of them. *[indistinct talk]*
5	Selena	...*or,* some of them are cherries.
6	Kate	No! I tell – the only colours – the only colours [you can get ( ) yellow or red.
7	Ella	[no ( ) of poison – that's why I eat the only things what come from the shop what ain't poison cos I *don't* eat them from a – from outside.
8	**David**	**Why?**
9	Ella	Cos – cos – cos – me and my Mum don't know if they're poison or not, and my brother and and my sister and my Dad. So, that's why *we* only eat them from the shop.
10	**David**	**From the shop ( ) poison.**
11	Selena	You do eat it from the boys who say 'please can – do you want something to eat?'
12	Kate	What do you eat? What [don't you eat?
13	Ella	[I – I – I don't eat anything – grows –
14	Kate	What food is it?
15	Selena	Um – some berries are poison.
16	Kate	Berries?
17	Selena	Yes – red berries.
18	**David**	**But (apples) 're poison!**
19	Selena	Once upon a time, I went to a shop and they gave me one of these, um –
20	**David**	**For a long time, yeah, I eat some poison!**
21	Ella	Guess what – once upon a time I –
22	**David**	**'s on a time, yeah –**
23	Ella	This is real – a Grandma went to this um – the, the, field and she found some mushrooms – she picked the mushroom up and –

24	Selena	Ate it.
25	Ella	- she ate it.
26	Selena	Yeah?
27	**David**	**Yeah – yeah, yeah, yeah!**
28	Ella	[She's still alive!
29	Selena	[( ) poison!
30	Ella	She's still alive!
31	**David**	**Yeah – for a long time, yeah, I eat –**
32	Selena	Was it poison?
33	Ella	No.
34	**David**	**Once upon a time, yeah – me is real – I eat a poison food – I still alive!**
35	Selena	That can't happen!
36	Kate	I just eat any food I can.

What is collaboratively achieved through the talk?

The transcript illustrates the group sharing their knowledge of the subject of food that is safe and unsafe to eat, each child contributing information of their own to throw light on the topic. However, in addition to bringing their own learning to the topic, they also engage critically with one another's contributions, and by questioning and probing they elicit further information and extend both their own and each other's understandings.

Looking at the detail of the transcript – in turns 4 and 7, Ella raises the topic of poison plants and food and how to ensure that what you eat is safe. David's probing question 'why?' in turn 8 pushes her to define what she says more clearly. Selena, in turn 11, may be introducing the topic of hot food stalls or markets, where stall holders shout their wares – these being 'outside' but, she implies, the purveyors of reliable food. Kate, in turns 12 and 14, wants more elaboration on precisely which foods are safe/unsafe to eat. Selena comes in here suggesting that some berries are poison – and to Kate's query in turn 16, she further refines this to berries that are red.

About half way through the episode, the genre of the traditional fairy tale begins to appear in the children's discourse, intertwining with the more 'factual' information that they continue to relate. This starts with Selena's use of the authorial 'once upon a time', in turn 19, to preface her contribution about her visit to a shop. This may have been heard/interpreted by David as the 'For a long time – ', with which he cuts into Selena's utterance in his subsequent turn (20). 'Once upon a time' is then echoed by Ella in the following turn (21) and repeated by David as 's on a time' in turn 22. The interweaving

of the fictional language of the fairy tale with the 'facts' of the children's reported experiences continues, with Ella relating the 'real' anecdote of the 'Grandma' who picked mushrooms from the field. When Ella pauses, Selena, in turn 24, anticipates her conclusion by providing the final words 'ate it', thus completing Ella's sentence for her. Finally, Ella reveals that despite eating the mushroom from 'outside', the Grandma is still alive. In turn 32, Selena checks 'Was it poison?'. Ella answers 'no'.

By the end of the discussion, then, children have explored the possibility that food outside can sometimes be safely eaten. The discussion as a whole might be seen as an example of children jointly constructing knowledge around this topic.

EAL learning

The contributions by David, the one boy in the group and the only EAL learner to take part in this particular conversation, are interesting from several angles – both cognitive and social. Scanning through his utterances, it can be seen that he is keen to take part, speaking on 9 occasions. However, he has difficulty in fully accessing the discussion. This might be because the subject is divorced from the 'here and now' of the activity of the classroom and contains vocabulary that may be unfamiliar. His question 'Why?' to Ella in turn 8, indicates an understanding of at least part of her statement about why her family eats only food that comes from the shop. But his statements in turns 10 and 18 suggest that he may be unclear about the meaning of the word 'poison' – from Selena's comment that red berries are poison, David may be equating other red fruits (apples) with this colour. (Interestingly, the notion of a poison apple – featured in another story with which the children will be familiar, that of 'Snow White' – may possibly have evoked the 'Once upon a time...' with which Selena begins her next sentence in turn 19 and which starts off the fairytale theme of the discourse.) In turn 20, David states that he has been eating 'some poison' for a long time and he reiterates this several times before his final turn 34 in which he asserts that he has eaten poison food and is still alive.

Scanning through David's contributions, it might be suggested that the meaning of the word 'poison' may have become increasingly apparent to him through the preceding discourse. An alternate 'reading', on the other hand, might be that David *does*

understand the meaning of the word and his method of gaining access to the group discussion is by way of provocative, challenging statements. Although his question 'why?' in turn 9 is answered by Ella, his subsequent statements appear to be ignored by the rest of the group. However, what David can be seen to be doing is cumulatively incorporating fragments of the preceding dialogue into his own utterances until, in turn 34, he finally articulates a fairly complex train of thought which receives a response from Selena – to the effect that 'That can't happen!'

Discussion

The more creative aspect of the assigned Literacy hour 'task' – drawing a picture – has provided a stimulus for this wide-ranging talk, in which the children's own 'lived in' experiences out of school have been interwoven with the storybook world and genre of the texts that they have been studying during their literacy hours. Interpreting the 'Poison Food' discussion from a Vygotskyan perspective, the child is thus 'an actor within emergent and non-deterministic discourse contexts...as the child moves within the social world of the classroom, she appropriates but also reconstructs the discourses that constitute the social world of her classroom' (Hicks, 1996:108). Hicks, in her discourse-orientated study of children's learning, views 'this dialogic relationship between social discourses and social activity, and the child's appropriation of those discourses... [as what] I have termed *learning*...learning occurs as the coconstruction (or reconstruction) of social meanings *from within* the parameters of emergent, socially negotiated, and discursive activity' (p 136).

The articulated features of this *learning* are, as Maybin points out, 'highly collaborative' – rather than being generated in one mind and then communicated to another through talk, meanings are collaboratively and interactionally constructed between people; these meanings, however, are provisional and frequently contested – 'there is a fluidity about them which contrasts with the more clearly defined, fixed forms of knowledge circulating in the official curriculum through more formal teacher-pupil dialogue, worksheets and text-books' (1994:148). Thus it is the *respondent* who chooses a particular interpretation – and responsibility for the meaning and purposes of particular utterances is dispersed between participants in the conversation rather than lodging with the speaker.

The provisionality and ambiguity of informal talk thus helps children to negotiate the complex relationship between individual purposes and cultural authority, and to develop their own personal identities, says Maybin. One of the ways in which children achieve this is through the reporting and taking on of other people's voices – this effecting a particularly rich resource for negotiating and constructing meaning. Such features are a particular characteristic of the 'Poison Food' episode. In the first half they are used to give authority to the points the children are making: Ella, echoing her parents, reports *why* she eats only food that comes from the shop and Selena, questioning Ella's definition of safe food, recalls the words of hot food stallholders shouting their wares. In the second half of the discussion, the language of the fairy tale genre is intertwined with children's own 'real' experiences – and then David, in cumulatively appropriating successive utterances made by the group, combines these in a personal description depicting himself as capable of eating poison food and remaining alive.

The 'socially negotiated' aspect of the children's talk was interesting; as observed in the exploratory phase of the study, the discussions often had a 'dynamic' to them, with a personal, sometimes competitive edge and a position to be defended. This aspect of the talk, the nuances of which are more apparent on recordings, are not easily captured within a written transcript. In the main, the children's discussion of 'Poison Food' was fairly relaxed, with the feel of genuine interest by the participants in exploring the issue rather than competing with each other. David, however, appeared to present something of an exception to this, his contributions, expressed with a certain emphasis, perhaps being intentionally provocative as a way of gaining entry into a discussion from which he felt somewhat excluded. The next episode, 'Felt-tip', provides a contrast, with the children's talk being viewed as closely bound to the dynamics of personal relationships.

11.4.2 Episode 2: *'Felt – tip'*

This Reception class group had been given various materials – card, coloured paper, glue pens, crayons and pencils with which to 'make a card for someone special'. They were thus engaged in creative and writing activities (the activity itself stemmed from the 'big book' story about the elephant family's birthday discussed in part one of Phase 2 of the

present study). There were 5 children in the group, three boys and two girls – the girls both EAL learners.

Here, the talk is related to the materials that the children are using to carry out their task rather than to the task *per se.* In the short episode, they exchange views concerning their likes and dislikes of felt-tip pens and discuss a matter of pronunciation. Liala, the chief protagonist, defends her position with some vigour.

1	**Halina**	**I don't like felt-tips.**
2	**Liala**	**Do you, Lee?**
3	Lee	What?
4	**Liala**	**Like felt-pens?**
5	*[several voices]*	I do! I do!
6	**Liala**	**I do cos *every time* I have pencils – I don't like pencils any more – I like felt-ips.** *[she doesn't pronounce the 't' in 'tips']*
7	Jamie	Felt-tips *[correcting Liala's pronunciation]*
8	**Liala**	**Amina *always* say – 'felt-*ip*'!** *[Amina is Liala's cousin in Year One]*
9	Lee	Felt-tips?
10	**Liala**	**No – felt-ip!**
11	Lee	It's felt-*tip* innit? *[seeking confirmation]*
12	**Liala**	**Yeah.** *[quietly]*
13	Jamie	Felt-ip!
14	Lee	That don't make sense, man!
15	Jamie	She said 'felt-felt-felt....'
16	Lee	'Tip' *[supplying word]*
17	**Liala**	**Goes like 'tip'** *[softly, to herself]*

EAL learners and learning through collaboration

In contrast to 'Poison Food', it is the EAL learner, Liala, who orchestrates the discussion. She initiates this in turns 2,4 and 6; justifies her position with additional evidence (turn 8) when challenged; listens to the viewpoint of others and appears to adjust her own viewpoint in the light of the consensus view (turn 17). In doing so, she performs a number of language functions: she makes a statement (turn 6), asks a question (turn 2) and explains – or justifies – her position in turn 8.

As has been previously observed, the social and cognitive aspects of the talk may be seen as intertwined, with an utterance frequently serving both purposes simultaneously. It is in fact another EAL learner, Halina, who introduces the topic (turn 1) by expressing a

dislike for felt-tips, and her statement is then picked up by Liala in turn 2 when she canvasses Lee's view before expressing her own positive opinion of felt-tips in turn 6. Rather than showing an interest in *why* Halina doesn't like felt-tips, then, Liala's discourse serves to (in a sense) marginalise her as the only person not liking felt-tips, and Halina does not contribute again. Possibly, then, there exists a tension between the two girls which accounts for Liala's initial somewhat challenging responses to Halina's statement. Lee appears to be a member of the group whose view Liala particularly values – she addresses her initial question to him and also (finally) acquiesces to his opinion in turn 12.

Other 'dialogic' features within the children's discourse occur towards the end of the episode, from turn 13 onwards, with Lee's judgmental comment (turn 14) on Jamie's mimicry of Liala's pronunciation (turn 13). And again, in turn 16, Lee completes Jamie's utterance of turn 15. There is also an example of the 'taking on of voices' with Lee's comment 'that don't make sense, man!' (turn 14). As Maybin's research (1994) observed, children often invoke voices carrying particular kinds of power when they are trying to win an argument or put a point more strongly, and Lee's statement may be one which he is familiar with from outside the classroom – at home, the wider community or school playground, for example. Further, the very fact that Liala's pronunciation has been questioned at all (by Jamie, turn 7) may be a result of the exchanges taking place in the *classroom* – a setting in which evaluation of pupils' performance is the norm.

<u>Summary</u>

This episode has the feel of a 'pedagogical moment'- one that is related to the (concrete) materials that the children are using, and in which Liala's awareness is raised about a matter of pronunciation. The exchanges in this particular episode were lively – illustrating, I have suggested, that more than a disinterested pursuit of 'correct' pronunciation was at stake. As Maybin observes:

> *...one utterance can (and usually does) serve a number of different cognitive and social purposes simultaneously. It is therefore not possible to separate out 'talk for conveying information' from 'talk for maintaining social relations', as is suggested in the Cox Report (DES, 1989) for example.*
>
> (1994:148)

The 'Felt-tip' episode suggests that Lee is a popular member of the group – Liala seeking his opinion, for example. He also makes the judgement that Liala's pronunciation is nonsensical. Halina, though, is effectively excluded from the discussion when the rest of the group disagree with her expressed opinion, and she appears to be more on the margins of the group. In another group work session later in the week, however, their relative status is somewhat reversed, as the next episode illustrates.

11.4.3 Episode 3: *'Sh' sound (1)*

In this session, the same group of children were assigned a task requiring them to complete a phonic worksheet depicting line drawings of various objects. The drawings of objects starting with 'sh' sound were to be coloured in, while those *not* starting with this sound were to be left uncoloured. The exchanges were typical of many observed during the present study to do with the business of getting a task done – particularly when there is a strongly delineated right/wrong outcome. Children comment on each other's work and look for assistance from each other:

1	Lee	What's some'un with a 'shuh'?
2	**Halina**	**Shelf, shed, shower. Shelf.** *[a shed and a shower are depicted on the sheet]*
3	Lee	Shelf? Where's shelf? *[looking for the drawing on his worksheet]*
4	(?)	Nowhere!
5	Lee	Do you have to colour the house in?
6	**Halina**	**No, that's not a (house?) it's a shed – *shed!***
7	Lee	Shuh, shed, shuh, shuh, shuh. Do you have to colour the shed in?
8	Luke	Yes, cos this is a shell and it begins with 'shuh' *[referring to the picture that he is colouring in]*

While the previous two episodes had been sparked off by the task, but were not linked to its completion – the exchanges above relate directly to this end. In contrast to these episodes, both of which gave children scope to respond in a more personal and imaginative manner, the demands made by the worksheet were restricted to a recall and application of previously acquired knowledge. The main task, once the picture to be coloured in had been identified, was the physical activity of colouring, and the children all remained firmly focused upon carrying this out. Their talk was thus an accompaniment to, rather than a distraction from, the activity.

Purposeful' collaboration

Whereas the previous two episodes have featured 'learning opportunities' that arise, in a sense, unplanned from the discourse, Episode 3 features exchanges of a more conventional teacher-learner nature. They stem from Lee's direct request for help in completing his worksheet, and this time Halina takes a central role in the discourse, authoritatively answering (in turn 2) Lee's request for examples of objects beginning with 'sh' sound and correcting (in turn 6) his labelling of the shed as a 'house'.

At the outset (turn 1), it appears that Lee did not initially engage with the task, since he has not made the connection between the sound and colouring in the pictures; after Halina's second intervention, however, he repeats the sound to himself, connecting it to the word 'shed' (turn 7). Still uncertain about what to do next, though, he checks whether or not to colour in the shed. This time it is Luke who responds, and rather than simply answering yes/no, he gives the further (generalising) example of the shell and why he is colouring it in.

'Conscious' learning

By the end of this short episode, then, Lee has been assisted by his peers in carrying out his task, after failing to understand in sufficient detail the teacher's initial instructions. Rather than simply *telling* him which pictures to colour in, members of the group have provided what might be regarded as 'scaffolding' moves – answering Lee's questions, giving illustrations – which enable him to move towards his own understanding of what is required in completing the activity.

With the bulk of the session being spent repetitively colouring in the pictures – undemanding of intellectual activity once the correct picture had been initially identified – the exchanges may also serve to keep the rest of the group focused, since their utterances involve articulating features of the task itself. Accompanying observation notes record how the children continued colouring in their own worksheets while at the same time responding to Lee's requests for assistance. The next episode, occurring some minutes later, may also be seen as assisting the children in this respect.

11.4.4 Episode 4: *'Sh' sound (2)*

During the intervening period separating the two episodes, Lee has been removed to another table after the teacher notices his rather noisy conversation and slow progress with his worksheet. The remaining four members of the group carry on their discourse while continuing to colour in the pictures.

1	**Halina**	**I need red.**
2	Jamie	Chips! Thank you. *[another child passes him a colouring pencil]*
3	Luke	Chick! Chick!
4	(?)	'sh', 'sh'. *[correcting Jamie and Luke, perhaps]*
5	Luke	Chick!
6	Jamie	Chip!
7	**Liala**	**No – we thinking 'bout 'shuh', 'shuh' – 'shell'.**
8	Jamie	Shick! Shick!
9	Luke	She said 'shell'.
10	Jamie	I didn't say 'shell' – *you* did. I said 'shed' – said 'shed'.
11	Luke	I said 'shed', you said 'sheep'. *[he sings these words]*
12	(?)	Sheep.
13	**Liala**	**Sh – sheep – shuh.**
14	Luke	( ) sheep.
15	**Halina**	**'Sheep' begins with 'shuh'.**
16	Luke	Yeah, 'sheep' – 'shuh'. Do you really say....
17	**Liala**	**Sheep.**
18	Luke	I saw the sheep at the zoo.
19	**Halina**	**Yes, there's....**
20	Jamie	I don't care! *[responding to Luke's comment – turn 17]*
21	**Liala**	**There – colouring in the shell – cos shell begins with 'shuh'.**
22	Luke	That starts with ( )'s name – 'suh'.

The character of the talk

Overall, the talk has a somewhat desultory feel to it in comparison with the previous two episodes – both of which had a particular didactic purpose – and it proceeded at a more leisurely pace. The exchanges between the boys are evocative, I would suggest, of Rogoff's characterisation of the 'curious fooling around' quality that exploratory peer interaction can take on when it has no *immediate* goals (section **6.2.1**). There is, though, a clear dichotomy within the group along gender lines; while the two boys start playing around with the sounds, the girls maintain a serious adherence to the task itself with Liala at one point (turn 7) attempting to bring the boys back 'on task'. Within this discourse there are thus in effect two conversations – or 'voices' – which might be characterised as, on the one hand, the playful, sometimes sparring and teasing voice of the child, and on the other, a more serious authoritarian adult voice.

Tracing the realisation of these 'voices' through the course of the episode, Jamie and Luke initiate the discourse (turns 2-6) with their playful articulation of names of pictures on the worksheet *not* to be coloured in, since they start with a different sound. It is possibly Liala who intervenes in turn 4, before reminding them again in turn 7 that it is 'sh' sound that they should be considering. In taking on a teacherly role here, and attempting to bring Jamie and Luke back on task, she also picks up on one of the phrases used by the teacher to focus pupils: 'We're thinking about...'. Jamie, in turn 8, however, neither wholly accepts nor rejects Liala's intervention – instead, he responds by substituting 'sh' for 'ch' in the word 'chick' to make a nonsense word – 'shick'. Corrected by Luke in the next turn, Jamie retorts with some slight irritation in turn 10. Luke's response to this (turn 11) is a mimicry of Jamie's words, sung with a taunting tune. His insertion of 'sheep' in place of 'shell' initiates a succession of exchanges about sheep (turns 12-18).

In the second half of the episode, Liala and Halina are more to the fore. However, their utterances contrast somewhat with those of Jamie and Luke in that they appear to function more as a means by which they maintain their focus upon the task, rather than as *interactions* as such. The utterances in turns 13, 15, 17 and 21 were spoken quite slowly and deliberately and did not seem to be particularly inviting of a response; Halina's unfinished comment in turn 19 is the only exception to this, apart from Liala's intervention in turn 7. Luke's comments in turns 16, 18 and 22 on the other hand all appear to have a primarily social function.

<u>Summary</u>

I have suggested that the talk here serves a similar function to that in the previous episode in being concerned with getting a task done. But whereas the talk in the first extract was consciously and deliberately orientated towards this end, that in the present episode served rather to keep children focused upon what was a repetitive task with little challenge after the initial picture identification had been made. The way in which this was effected by the children differed, in this case, along gender lines – with the two boys adopting a more creative (their 'play' on the sounds) interactive and bantering tone while each of the girls appeared to be using a form of talk (for herself) that articulated the

particular facet of the task with she was presently engaged. That these thoughts were articulated aloud, however, suggests a social element also – and Luke was especially active in responding to them as such (turns 14, 16, 18 and 22).

11.5 Summary and discussion

In this chapter I have explored four examples of informal talk arising amongst children while they carry out Literacy Hour tasks during unsupervised group work sessions, and suggested ways in which these may be enhancing of children's development. This section considers the findings in terms of the research questions – the main Research Question 4 enquiring into the features of the talk and how it could be characterised in terms of potential pupil learning.

Viewing 'learning' as the co-construction, or reconstruction, of social meaning emerging from socially negotiated and discursive activity, provides, I would suggest, an apt characterisation of these children's conversations as they question, answer, challenge, probe and share ideas with each other. More precisely, it is through achieving a shared 'intersubjective' understanding of the matter in hand (Rommetveit, 1979) that development occurs. I would suggest that at least one of these conversations ('Felt-tip') shows evidence of this, as Liala appears to adjust her perspective to that of the rest of the group in turn 17. 'Poison Food' is also suggestive of children's shifting perspectives, as described in the analysis.

Returning to the research questions, 4a and 4b asked how the talk arose and how it related to the more formal tasks that the children were engaged with. Looked at in sum, the episodes illustrate the diversity in terms of function that can be represented in such talk. *'Sh' sound 1* contained talk concerned with a direct request for help in carrying out the task and thus had a conscious didactic element, while *Felt-tip* was in the main a challenge by her peers to a child's present understanding of an item of pronunciation – initially contested but subsequently apparently accepted. *Poison Food* and *'Sh' sound 2* both related to pictures children were drawing and colouring in. During the former episode, in which children drew their own pictures depicting imaginary elements from a traditional story, the talk sparked off by the pictures ranged far from the execution of the

task *per se* – in a sense, coming to inhabit the world of the pictures themselves as children shared particular information and experiences and gradually started to incorporate elements of the fairytale genre itself into their anecdotes. In the latter session, with the task confined to the colouring in of line drawings on a worksheet, two types of talk were identified which appeared to function as an accompaniment by which children helped themselves to maintain focus: the spelling out of the features of the task as it was carried out – and the more playful, creative playing around with the sounds depicted by the worksheet.

<u>EAL learners</u>

Research questions 4c and 4d focused attention on what was collaboratively achieved through the talk and how EAL learners participated. Observations carried out during the exploratory phase of the study and part 1 of Phase Two, noted EAL learners' apparent passivity during teacher-led sessions of the Literacy Hour. During unsupervised segments of the Literacy Hour, by contrast, these children often appeared as animated contributors to group discourse and it was posited that informal peer talk might be regarded as an additional 'site' for learning for these pupils. In this chapter I have examined four examples of such talk – in each of which, EAL learners played a prominent role. In what sense, then, could the discourse be considered as providing a forum for development for these pupils?

Active participation. Wong Fillmore (1082), Cummins (1988) and others emphasise the importance of an 'interactionist' approach to language learning in which 'genuine understanding is seen as involving active discovery on the part of the child' Cummins (p 204*)*. Informal talk of the nature discussed in the present chapter, I have suggested, is likely to feature enhanced pupil-engagement since children are not *required* to talk, but will do so when it becomes personally important to them to do so. As van Lier writes:

> *When they are conscious learners in the full sense of the word, it is likely that opportunities for learning will be increased, since then the learners themselves are in charge of creating them.* (1998:142)

David, in *Poison Food*, was especially persistent in his attempts to play a part in the ongoing discourse (despite a lack of 'uptake' of most of his comments by the rest of the group) making a total of nine contributions in all, each of which revealed his close attention to the preceding utterances. In *Felt-tip*, it is an EAL learner who initiates the conversation and then finds herself having to defend her position – which she does with some vigour – in the face of challenge by the rest of the group. In both these episodes, issues within the children's social relationships are interwoven with the interactions themselves, giving them a particular momentum or forcefulness. In both episodes too, I suggest, learning has been 'pushed forward' for the two EAL learners.

'Active participation' of a different kind occurs in the two *'Sh' sound* episodes, with the two EAL learners contributing *reactively* to other children's intitiations. Still, however, they *decide* to join in, since no comments or questions are addressed to them by name. Here, the form of their participation is to take on the responsible 'teacherly' role of providing strategic information and focusing that assists other children (and themselves) to complete their set tasks.

The four samples of peer talk discussed in this chapter have illustrated EAL learners both being assisted by their peers and *themselves* assisting other children in aspects of language and literacy development. Children are thus responsive to the prevailing circumstances at any one time, taking on the status represented by the roles that they move contingently in and out of according to the needs of the moment. There is thus a democratic element to talk of this nature – itself free from the constraints of didactically contrived learning intentions – that provides a forum for EAL learners and their peers to operate on a par of equality with each other.

11.5.1 Contrast with more 'formal' classroom talk

The study of the individual extracts suggests that a variety of learning opportunities, collaboratively effected, were thus presented through the children's interactions, their talk around the task functioning in diverse ways – imaginative (creating elements of a story; 'nonsense' words); exploratory (sharing, questioning, challenging); focusing (accompanying task/activity); didactic (informing, elucidating, scaffolding). What, then,

are the particular circumstances prevailing here which differ from teacher-pupil interactions, and also, perhaps, from those sessions in which the production of collaborative talk between pupils is a primary, planned-for purpose of the task?

- There is opportunity for more lengthy conversation and periods of reflection than may occur in more formal 'contrived' classroom discourse that has a particular end in view. Children are engaged in other tasks *as* they talk. Ideas thus have more time to develop and to be explored and may become evident in conversation (progression in learning).

- Children are likely to be less inhibited when talking to peers of relatively equal status than with the teacher and a more realistic picture of their development may become apparent. Patterns of social as well as linguistic interaction are revealed.

- Children will contribute *when moved to do so* rather than when required; thus there is likely to be a greater personal engagement or investment in the topic of discussion and an incentive to 'stretch' one's own thinking.

11.5.2 Peer group discourse and the Literacy Hour

While the NLS *Framework* emphasises the importance of interactive practices during the Literacy Hour, these are realised within the context of teacher-managed and directed activity. The data that form the content of the present chapter, it may be suggested, illustrate that child-managed interactions – un-planned for and un-documented within the NLS remit – might themselves play a significant role in children's language and literacy development as well as contributing to their developing sense of 'self'. As Dyson (1994) has argued, the recognition that children's academic accomplishments can be influenced by their relationships with each other as well as with the teacher does not minimise the teacher's role – rather, the teacher can 'legitimise' the children's interest in each other and thus allow their social life to 'energize' rather than interfere with the academic curriculum.

11.6 A context for pupil peer group discourses

As Rogoff (1990) has observed, peers serve as highly available and active companions, providing each other with motivation, imagination and opportunities for creative elaboration. Through consideration of children's talk undertaken in the present chapter, I have suggested that their own conversations, often linked to literacy 'matters in hand',

may be regarded as positively aiding their learning. All three teachers in the present study permitted children to talk quietly during group work as long as this did not distract from proceedings or become too intrusive. Yet in contemporary classrooms generally, there appears to be little attention paid to the potential of talk that is brought into play by children themselves (as opposed to that explicitly set up by the teacher) and this, it seems, is often tolerated rather than considered as positive in its own right. This is arguably unsurprising given the context of an externally prescribed and directed curriculum, driven by the need to achieve measurable national targets of 'achievement', and placing the teacher as the conduit through which this will be effected.

While adult-child interaction in educational settings aims to promote learning through 'scaffolding' processes – elements of which the NLS *Framework* appears to espouse – the concept itself (as realised in classroom practice), has been considered by some to provide an insufficient account of mechanisms of learning – as discussed in the main Literature Review.

I would suggest that the reconception of learning in the ZPD discussed in section 6.2.2 provides a context in which to consider the peer group talk. The initiative taken by the children in introducing topics for conversation, the animated nature of their talk – rich in content and complexity compared with the more formal didactic talk of the classroom – was illustrative of Hatano's (1993) first 'revising assumption' – that 'learners are active'. The second revising assumption, concerning the efforts a learner makes to achieve understanding, was also illustrated by the children getting into the detail of the topic: they questioned each other in order to understand, brought in their own experiences as evidence, suggested additional or alternative examples and disputed assumptions – all evidence of an active engagement and elaboration of topics, rather than a passive acceptance of information in the form imparted. Both the 'Poison Food' and 'Felt Tip' extracts illustrate well these first two revising assumptions.

The third and fourth assumptions have a particular resonance with this stage of the study. Hatano's third assumption concerning 'horizontal' interactions (particularly between peers) in connection with 'genuine questions' and accessibility of information, and

alluding to the 'substantial' contribution to knowledge acquisition that these can make, has been in itself the subject of this second part of Phase Two of the research. Halina and Luke assisting Lee (Episode 3) is one illustration from the data of this third assumption: Lee, having failed to understand the teacher's explanation, is assisted to an understanding by his peers – this being helped also by his *own activity* in seeking an answer to his question. (It was noted also that the Reception teacher's 'facilitating' stance towards pupils, posing 'genuine' questions and personal tentativeness, for example, appeared to motivate them to offer their own ideas and there were many initiated comments from some pupils. The EAL learners, however, were reticent to speak, whereas within the smaller peer group, they assumed strong and sometimes authoritative roles.) The children's peers themselves might be seen as representing part of the 'multiple sources of information' – other than the teacher – that enhance knowledge construction in the fourth revising assumption.

As an extension to the points made above, I would (tentatively) suggest that the more confident roles played by EAL learners in peer learning contexts in the classroom may have their antecedents in the home work/learning experiences of these children. During their interviews (Phase One of the study), most parents mentioned the important role played by siblings and other children – cousins, for example, in assisting reading and writing activities set by the school. And during the dispute in the 'Felt-tip' episode, it is her older cousin, rather than an adult, that Liala cites as an authority by which she justifies her stance. This is an aspect of children's learning that has been documented by Gregory (2000), as mentioned in section **6.3.4.1.**

Peer talk: the present study

Understood within the context outlined above, talk between peers becomes an additional and important site for development. The specific nature of the talk discussed in this chapter is that arising spontaneously amongst children themselves – and I have argued that as such, children are likely to be particularly engaged and motivated to stretch their thinking – they are the *active* learners envisaged in the 'revising assumptions' outlined above. The talk accompanied and, in Dyson's phrase, 'energized' the more formal activities in different ways:

- *Talk concerned with 'getting the task done'* included an accompanying commentary, direct requests for assistance, refocusing moves by children (for the benefit of others) and imaginative wordplay around the phonic sounds depicted on a worksheet.

- *Talk 'inspired by' the task itself* – this facilitating imaginative engagement with the topic – e.g. in 'Poison Food', the drawings accompanying a story-composition sparked off thoughtful exploration in which children brought their own experiences to bear in discussing an issue of interest to them, engaging critically but constructively with each other's ideas. This is an example, I would suggest, of 'Exploratory Talk' (Mercer, 1996) – the most useful kind of classroom talk for developing reasoning – in which 'knowledge is made publicly accountable and reasoning is visible in the talk' (p 97).

- *Talk tenuously linked to the task* – sparked off by some element, e.g. 'Felt-Tip'.

In their talk, the children assisted each other's, and their own, activity and learning and enlarged their understanding of the various topics. There was a dimension, too, to the talk that was inextricably linked with the children's social relationships and which gave the talk a motivating force, or dynamic that may have served to stretch their thinking.

A Vygotskyan Model of knowledge acquisition

In its characteristics, I would suggest that the children's talk aligns with Hatano's proposal for a social constructivist account of knowledge acquisition in which it is recognised that:

1. Knowledge is often constructed when the learner interacts with the teacher peers, or artefacts embodying voices of others, creating jointly with them the context for interaction.

2. Through interaction something collective is produced that is shared among its participants. This process involves socioemotional components as well.

3. The learner incorporates this for generating, elaborating, and revising his or her knowledge.

4. This (smaller) system of face-to-face interaction is embedded in a larger system, such as an institution or a community which may officially set a limit on the kinds of interaction that can occur within the smaller system and also influence these interactions and thus the learner's construction of knowledge. (1993:164-5)

The Literacy Hour model of learning

In its prescribed body of knowledge, to be sequentially delivered to pupils by the teacher, the NLS might be regarded as embodying the former (unexpanded) view of learning through the ZPD (section **6.2.2**) – despite the claim that it 'is not a recipe for returning to some crude or simple form of "transmission" teaching' (*Framework*, p 8). Considering the 'revising assumptions' alongside the NLS conception of learning (in which 'literacy instruction' is to be delivered through 'interactive' teacher-pupil teaching), the first two assumptions, describing the active nature of learning, may conceivably be encompassed within the Literacy Hour format for teaching, being concerned with the nature of learning itself. However, the format would appear to provide little opportunity for 'assumptions' 3 and 4, highlighting knowledge construction and enhancement through peers and multiple sources of information – alternatives to the teacher.

<u>End note</u> While 'informal' peer group talk may fit with the revised model of Vygotskyan knowledge *acquisition*, there yet exists the problem – for such activity occurring within educational institutions demanding accountability – of how to evaluate such spontaneously arising talk, in terms of *learning*. Linked to this – the problem is one of 'how to characterize spontaneous or everyday concepts...and scientific concepts, as well as the relations between the two' (Hatano, 1993: 165). A solution to this problem 'is urgently needed because everyday concepts serve as a basis for interaction, negotiation, and sharing; and scientific concepts represent the best possible products of such joint activities' (*ibid*).

I would suggest that it is within the analysis of such child-initiated discourse itself that such evidence is to be found – as illustrated and discussed in this chapter. The social context seemed to provide a powerful motivating force for children to push forward their thinking as they both challenged and were challenged by each other. Samples of such talk can be revealing of how EAL learners use language, the cognitive strategies that children have developed, and concepts that have been internalised – as well as issues in children's personal and social development and how these might impact upon learning. Its value, then, lies in the insights it gives into the *processes* of learning, as well as into levels of mastery of a given body of knowledge.

Chapter 12

Summary and Conclusions

12.1 Introduction

In taking a grounded approach to study the Literacy Hour, this research has proceeded through several stages, during which different emphases have been to the fore. In the initial exploratory phase, Literacy Hours 'in action' were more generally observed and from consideration of these, several issues and questions concerning the working of the new curriculum have been raised. The following stage of the research, with a finer grained analysis taken towards researching interactive talk, has provided insights into the possibilities and limitations of aspects of the new curriculum for EAL learners and their peers. This chapter summarises and draws together the study.

The study in context

The overarching question for the study enquired into implications of the Literacy Hour for EAL learners in multiethnic Key Stage 1 classes. As a former teacher in such schools, I view the primary school classroom (in which children usually spend a year in the same room with the same teacher and peers) as, in a sense, society in 'microcosm' – in which confidence and attitudes towards self in relation to others, and children's own developing abilities are being formed. Considerations such as these inform an approach to classroom teaching that emphasises EAL learners as an integral part of their class – and this has also been reflected in my research approach, in which these children have been observed within the context of their whole class peer group. I have suggested, through literature cited along with discussion of my own experiences, that *broad* principles of 'good practice' in literacy development can be facilitated in ways that do not mark children out for separate teaching.

Also reflecting my former work has been the placing of the discussion within a wider framework concerning the positioning of teachers themselves in relation to the new curriculum. Edwards and Mercer's (1987) observation, alluded to in the Introduction, highlighted the tensions for teachers charged with inducting children into a 'ready made' culture while at the same time developing creative autonomous participants in a culture 'continually in the making'. This observation, made fifteen years ago, has been drawn into ever increasing focus during the intervening years, with the increasing prescription of the National Curriculum, Literacy and Numeracy[1] strategies. Threading through the present study, then, have been considerations of the *feasibility* for teachers of implementing new requirements while at the same time remaining 'contingent' to children's learning needs.

In terms of such issues as these, the Literacy Hour had both positive and negative potential: positive, as Bourne (2000) and Fisher (2000) have argued, for its inclusivity and high expectations for all children – but negative, in the view of Hilton (1998), Dombey (1998), NALDIC (1998) and others, in leaving little room for the teacher to respond to pupil need or to build upon what pupils themselves bring to the 'learning discourse'. However, with the Literacy Hour featuring 'interactive' teaching and the encouraging and extending of pupil contributions, there exists at least a superficial similarity of aspiration to a social constructivist view of learning which emphasises dialogic interaction between teachers and pupils alongside teachers' contingency to pupils' particular learning needs. Highlighting the ideas that children themselves bring to the learning process, and ways in which these are built upon by teachers, researchers have approached this on two levels: that of the *mechanism* of the interactions by which teachers 'scaffold' particular concepts with pupils, and a consideration of the way pupils themselves appropriate the means to further their own development. There are also issues here concerning the extent to which materials and ideas from children's own cultural backgrounds are incorporated into the learning process.

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[1] The National Numeracy Strategy was introduced into primary schools in 1999 and, like the Literacy Hour, is based upon an hour of teacher-led activities.

Phase One – the exploratory study

During the exploratory phase of the research, focusing on Literacy Hour reading practices, teachers were observed interacting with pupils, but in ways that did not appear to build on or extend pupil responses, and there seemed to be little opportunity for children's own ideas to be brought to the learning discourse. I suggested that this might be owing to a combination of the time-constrained nature of the segments of the Literacy Hour, along with issues of class management. For example, on those days in which observations were made, all three teachers adapted the structure of their Guided Reading sessions to circulate around the rest of the class. Each also omitted the final two stages of this activity – 'Return to the text' and 'Follow- up' – the point in the session during which the teacher 'discusses' the book itself with pupils (see Table **4.1**). During Shared Text Work, there seemed little time to fit in the more focused activities required along with *sustained* reading of the enlarged books, and such reading was not a feature of any sessions observed (section **4.4.1**). I have suggested that a result of this might be to impede the build-up of overall meaning for children by which (in a 'constructivist' view of learning) a context for decoding of the print could be established – and through which, also, a personal connection with the themes of the book might be established (which representing the overall purpose of reading).

I decided, then, to examine more closely the mechanisms by which teachers were developing reading through 'interactive' teaching, and the possible implications for EAL learners. Also taken forward to Phase Two was a consideration of the ways in which children's own initiated conversations between themselves, observed during unsupervised segments of the Literacy Hour, might further development in the wider sense mentioned above.

12.2 Characterising teacher-pupil talk and reading development.

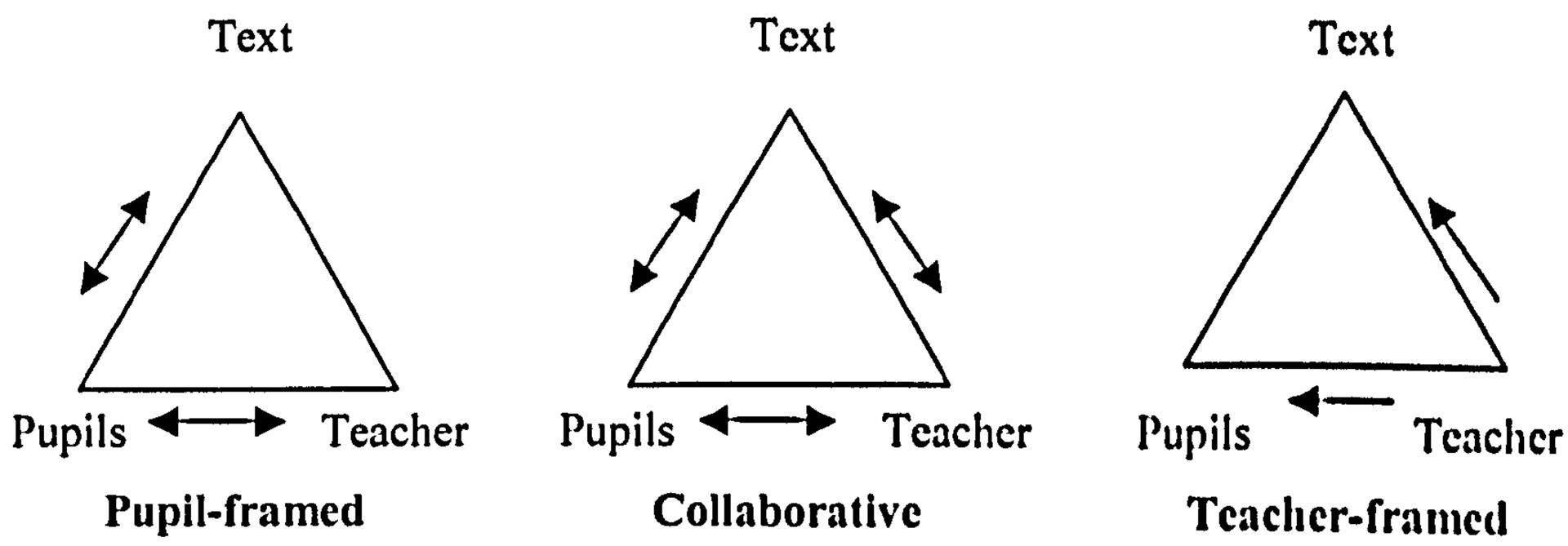
Research Question 2 thus enquired into patterns of interaction between teachers and pupils during reading activities, and how these could be characterised in terms of potential pupil learning, and Research Question 3 focused on perspectives on the reading process that were thus modelled in the Literacy Hour teaching practices. The two Literacy Hour activities in which reading is developed – Shared Text Work and Guided

Reading – were therefore the primary focus, along with the associated Focused Word Work.

12.2.1 Shared Text Work: 3 patterns of teacher-pupil talk during 'Shared Reading'

I have suggested that this activity, which offers opportunities for EAL learners to engage with the reading process on a variety of levels as part of their peer group, can be viewed as a 'triangular discourse' between the book, the teacher and the child. I have summarised this in the figure below, showing the emphases of activity laid upon different aspects of this three-way discourse, as observed in the three classes during Phase Two of the study.

Figure 12.1 *Teacher-pupil discourse in Shared Text Work: emphases of activity.*



Thus in Pupil-framed talk, pupils interact with the text while the teacher plays a facilitating role, picking up, reflecting back and extending their learning. Pupils interact with the text in Collaborative talk, guided *by* the teacher, who is contingently active to individual pupils within the communal 'sense-making'. Pupils are passively positioned during Teacher-framed talk, while the teacher is active in pursuit of a predetermined agenda; the text is the vehicle through which this external agenda is realised.

I have suggested that the talk offers varying possibilities for EAL learners:

- *Teacher-framed talk:* researchers have generally considered this type of talk to be unhelpful to pupil learning (Westgate and Hughes, 1997). In the present study, however, there were illustrations of its use that may be regarded as helpful for

EAL learners. The Year Two teacher, for instance, gave examples of the use of the word 'giant' in different contexts in order to illuminate its meaning for children. She also used 're-initiation' moves with her pupils and through this, sentence structure was modelled for EAL learners. Such short timely interventions can be useful in maintaining the flow of the session, keeping it focused for all children, while acting contingently to support EAL learners. However, as illustrated in part 1 of Phase Two of the study, when used more exclusively, it denies pupils the chance to bring their own understandings to reading, and thus for the teacher to build upon and extend their established learning.

- *Pupil-framed talk* gave pupils the opportunity to reflect upon the text and interpret it in a personal way – and in conjunction with the text illustrations, this potentially provides a strong support for EAL learners. It enables pupils to bring their established understandings to bear and thus has the potential for the teacher to further scaffold and extend their learning. With teachers providing affirmative, non-judgemental comments, and summarising and guiding moves, pupils are encouraged to offer their own ideas. Within the context of those communal sessions observed, however, the EAL learners rarely contributed. This may have been owing to reticence within the large group segments of the Literacy Hour, or to difficulty in following the meandering course that such talk may take. There is the danger of loss of focus for these children in particular.

- *Collaborative talk:* opportunity for effective interactive teaching with pupil engagement. The teacher steers the overall course, keeping pace and momentum, but providing slots for individual pupils to contribute to the communal 'sense-making'. During the co-construction of the story, the teacher has the opportunity to direct questions appropriate to individual pupils' level of understanding: these questions, with answers not predetermined but requiring some interpretation by pupils themselves, highlight their status as joint 'meaning-makers' with their teacher – but also give the teacher the opportunity to provide scaffolding to push their thinking forward in her 'feedback' move. Repetition, eg of question *form*, to

successive pupils models language for EAL learners. Talk anchored closely to the illustrations develops vocabulary and makes meaning clear for these learners. Rather than attention to discrete areas of the reading curriculum, such sessions have a cohesiveness – with the 'whole' amounting to something larger than the individual parts. Pupils might thus be regarded as operating within a form of 'shared' ZPD. As a whole-class activity there is an egalitarian feel to Shared Text Work, lacking in the group work segments of the Literacy Hour. For young EAL learners, this means playing their part alongside their peers in a supportive framework which provides helpful visual prompts, repetition of language structures and vocabulary development.

Categories, however, while useful for conceptualising talk in a broad manner, cannot be exhaustively descriptive or defining of discourse in practice. Children will have varying needs, activities will change – as will the type of book used – and the teacher will need to be contingent to a variety of pressures, both internal and external to the classroom. This was illustrated in the discourse style of two of the teachers, who adopted different styles of talk to suit the needs of the moment – for example in the change to 'teacher-framed' discourse during Focused Word Work.

12.2.2 Conformity of discourse patterns: Focused Word Work

The somewhat abrupt switch, in the Reception Class and Year One, from talk patterns that incorporated pupils' contributions to those in which these were largely excluded by teachers' eliciting IRF questioning, may be seen as examples of teachers varying their discourse to the particular needs of the lesson. And the particular requirements of Focused Word Work as promulgated by the *Framework* (and also the LEA Literacy Consultant) are 15 minutes of systematic teaching of phonological awareness, phonics and spelling. I have suggested, therefore, that in carving up the Literacy Hour into demarcated sections, the NLS format may encourage the more compartmentalised teaching and learning practices observed (eg in Appendix 5), which can discourage pupils from actively working on meaning – reflecting on what they learn and applying it to new situations. Rather than situating word level work within the 'context' of shared reading, as envisaged by the *Framework* (p 11), it was largely divorced from such a context in two of the sessions. The absence of this supportive context (the illustrations, especially) must

be regarded as unhelpful for children in developing learning with understanding, and can make teaching incomprehensible for EAL learners, struggling to cope with word *meaning* in addition to the phonological analysis. There were several instances of this observed – Zaheem's confusion over 'sh' and 's' for example (Appendix 5).

12.2.3 Guided Reading: reduced opportunities for teacher contingency and pupil-response

The format of Guided Reading, I have suggested, potentially reverses the more active role of the pupil – implicit in the format of 'individualised' reading sessions – to one of comparative passivity. Conversely, the teacher's role becomes active whereas formerly it was *contingently* active (in scaffolding moves as the child read). The extent to which finely tuned scaffolding moves are possible during the 5 minute period in which the teacher moves round the group of six children reading simultaneously might be queried.

However, in two of the sessions observed, rather than providing scaffolding moves for individual children as they read, teacher activity was expended in previewing the book – with teacher 'elicits' and 'directs' angled towards decoding the print and synchronising the activity of the 6 children in the group. The chart for Guided Reading (section 9.1) shows few pupil initiations in any of the three classes – so, although the activity of a group of children reading the same book offers the *potential* for discussion of responses and ideas, this was not a strong feature of any session observed.

In practice, none of the sessions followed the format laid down in the *Framework* – each teacher adapting their session in a different way to allow them to manage the needs of the whole class. This resulted in little teacher-monitoring of (or 'listening to') individual children reading. The three sessions were thus essentially 'Teacher-framed', children as readers being positioned externally in relation to the text, with their role emphasised as one of decoding the printed word rather than engaging with the ideas contained within it. The transcribed Guided Reading session in Appendix 8 gives some indication of how this was taken up by pupils themselves after their teacher had left the group (turns 294-327).

12.2.4 Summary of findings: Literacy Hour teacher-pupil talk.

The main points that have emerged from the analysis of teacher-pupil interactions during activities to develop reading in the Literacy Hour are set out below.

- The study has suggested 3 categories of teacher-pupil interaction in activities to develop pupils' reading during group and whole class sessions, and considered these in terms of the needs of pupils in multiethnic classes (Chapter 10). Each provides a different model of 'reading' for pupils and their role as a reader.

- The study has suggested that, rather than adopting an unvarying discourse pattern, as found in studies by Mroz *et al* (2000) and English *et al* (2002), teachers may adjust their talk during the Literacy Hour according to the nature of the activity (section **10.2**)

- I suggest that the 'IRF' mode of triadic teacher-eliciting talk, widely considered as negative to pupil learning, can, when used in conjunction with enlarged texts with clear pictures, play a helpful role in developing reading in multiethnic classes. As illustrated in section **8.3** of the study:

  - Short eliciting IRF exchanges enable the teacher to bring many pupils into the communal 'meaning-making'.

  - The short repetitive eliciting nature of IRF exchanges used to recreate the story through the illustrations can mirror the build up of suspense in a story and create atmosphere.

  - Question form can be varied according to needs of pupils.

  - The teacher's 'feedback' move can be used to shape learning.

  - Repetition of sentence structure can provide models of language for EAL learners – into which new items of descriptive vocabulary can be introduced (supported by the illustrations).

12.3 Pupil peer group discourses

Though not initially conceived as an aspect for study, pupil peer group discourse became an additional focus during the exploratory stage of the project (section **4.2.2**) since it seemed to demonstrate a 'richness' and link with Literacy Hour topics, and also to represent a forum in which EAL learners in particular were more confident to speak. While research into pupil peer group talk has tended to focus on that generated during *collaborative* activities, there has been little research at primary school level into that arising while children carry out individual tasks – the 'unplanned-for' and unsupervised talk amongst pupils – and its relation to more formal curriculum concerns. However, the importance of considering talk arising in a variety of settings has long been recognised and is accounted for in (for example) the provision for 'language sampling' in the Primary Language Record (Barrs *et al,* 1988) which I have used as a class teacher. More recently, both planned and spontaneous language sampling in a variety of classroom activities has been highlighted as a key tool in the formative assessment of EAL learners (Gardner and Rea-Dickins, 2002).

Within the context of researching the Literacy Hour, I was interested in the circumstances surrounding the talk as well as what the children collaboratively achieved by it and the part played by EAL learners. The main Research Question 4 for the second part of Phase Two of the study thus enquired into the features of the talk and how it could be characterised in terms of potential pupil learning. The samples of talk observed fell into 3 categories:

- *Talk concerned with 'getting the task done'* included an accompanying commentary, direct requests for assistance, refocusing moves by children (for the benefit of others) and imaginative bantering wordplay. EAL learners, reticent during teacher-involved talk, were observed taking on authoritative roles and were looked to for guidance by other children.

- *Talk 'inspired by' the task itself* – the more open-ended and creative nature of the task facilitating thoughtful and imaginative engagement with the topic (in this example, 'Poison Food'). Children engaged critically but constructively with

each other's ideas, questioning, probing and offering their own ideas. I have suggested that this is an example of 'Exploratory Talk' (Mercer, 1996) – the most useful kind of classroom talk for developing reasoning – in which 'knowledge is made publicly accountable and reasoning is visible in the talk' (p 97). Again, in the example discussed, the one EAL learner in the group – noticeably reticent in teacher-led interactions – made persistent efforts to gain entry into this peer group discourse by incorporating aspects of the preceding discussion into his own statements.

- *Talk tenuously linked to the task* – sparked off by some element, e.g. 'Felt-Tip'. This extract in particular illustrated the intertwining of the social and cognitive purposes in children's talk – observed by Maybin (1994) – and how even such 'off-task' exchanges can further development. Again, the two EAL learners in the group played prominent roles – one child initiating the topic and the other challenging it. In the course of the episode, a number of language functions were articulated by one of the EAL learners – who at the end appeared to have had her awareness raised regarding an aspect of pronunciation.

From a consideration of the children's conversations during the Literacy Hour, and the particular circumstances surrounding these, I have suggested that several 'facilitating' factors might be proposed: children are less inhibited than in teacher-pupil talk; they are not *required* to talk and thus will only do so when *moved* – this personal investment stretching their thinking; more time is available for reflection and for ideas to develop – these may becoming evident in the talk as progression in learning.

The place of such talk in the classroom. For EAL learners in particular, the observations suggested that such a forum for talk could offer a 'safe' environment in which they could develop their language and ideas – while at the same time engaging on a social basis with their peers. I also suggest that such talk can serve to support the more formal classroom tasks with which the pupils are engaged. In connection with monitoring and assessment issues mentioned above, I would suggest that when children are active in their *own interests*, their thinking (and 'performance') is likely to be pushed to its limits and thus a

more realistic picture of their development made available than otherwise might be the case. As a way of, in Dyson's (1994) phrase,'legitimising' such talk, it might be considered within broader interpretations of the ZPD discussed in sections **6.2.2** and **11.6**).

12.4 The scope and limitations of the study

The study has examined in detail particular instances of the Literacy Hour in action in three classrooms, exploring ways in which the teachers interact with pupils to develop reading, and aiming to draw out implications for practice with regard to the needs of EAL learners. As such, it has examined *facets* of practice under the new curriculum, and has not attempted to give a more general overview of the Literacy Hour *per se* as practised in these three classes. The final 'Plenary' segment of the hour, for example, has not formed part of the discussion, and within the complete Literacy Hour 'weeks', recorded in each class during Phase Two of the study, detailed analysis was restricted to the first day of each 'week' (the rationale for this being given in section **7.3.1**). With the exploratory phase of the study finding a variety of practice in the way teachers structured their reading sessions[2], Phase Two of the study has concentrated, rather, on a finer-grained analysis of the potential for learning encapsulated in discourses attached to particular features of the Literacy Hour format for developing reading.

As a result of this focus, analysis of NLS documents in the study is limited to those available as Phase One of the research was carried out. Since then, a number of documents containing additional guidance and revisions have been issued by the Department for Education and Skills (D/ES) and its predecessor, the Department for Education and Employment (D/EE) – as well as reports on implementation by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). The possible effects upon classroom practice of successive directives is beyond the scope of this research, and discussion of them has not therefore been included.

An extension to the study, enriching of its findings, would have been to take the analysis of Phase Two of the research back to the teachers themselves for more in-depth

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[2] See sections **4.4.1** and **4.6.2**; and compare, also, the Reception class teacher's session in **Appendix 3** with that in section **8.4**.

discussion than was attempted in this study – perhaps in the form of a group discussion of the findings and their implications. To what extent is the form of language used in interactions with pupils an 'issue' for teachers – and would they accept the interpretations I have placed upon the samples of teacher-pupil talk and the implications for development?

In adopting a 'grounded' approach to the research, I collected a wide amount of data during the earlier stages of the study, as detailed in Table **1.1**, and while the interviews (for example) provided useful informing and orientating information during the exploratory stages of the research, interviews with teachers of a more focused nature during Phase Two would have provided valuable feedback for the proposals I have made in the findings. In repeating such a study, I would thus allow time for more probing discussion with respondents as the findings emerged, with perhaps more informal information gathering during the earlier stages.

12.5 Implications for practice and pointers for further research

Implications for educational practice may be seen as implied in the summary of findings in section **12.2.4**. The more positive potential of the IRF teaching exchange for communal 'meaning making' in literacy development with groups and whole classes of children challenges established views on this mode of teaching and builds on the work of others (most notably Wells, 1993). For young developing readers, the book illustrations play a key role, with different picture books offering varying discourse potential (cf the Reception and Year One discourse, Chapter 8). Further research might explore in more depth the mechanisms and potential of such 3 way discourses (Figure **12.1**) during Shared Text Work, eg:

- Within a 'collaborative' discourse: the particular mechanisms by which teachers might draw pupils into such communal meaning-making and scaffold their contributions while at the same time maintaining an overview of meaning and focus (or 'dynamic') for the group as a whole. In the variety of their depicted themes, different books offer different possibilities for meaning-making – the potential of these too might be explored.

- The role of 'teacher framed' discourse in providing a 'bridge' from illustrated text to printed text as they scaffold meaning for EAL learners. Ways in which meanings thus generated can be 'handed back' to EAL learners, as envisaged by Gibbons (section **4.2.2**)

- In 'pupil framed' discourse: how pupils might themselves be assisted to collaboratively 'steer the course', bringing their own meanings to the reconstruction, with the teacher taking a less active part. Pupils are thus involved in planning and negotiating meaning with each other.

Implications for practice emerging from Part 2 of Phase Two include the potential of such naturally occurring talk for the assessment of children's language and conceptual development (as well as a recognition of its importance in its own right for development) – and a recognition that such discourse can assist the completion of more formal classroom tasks. With regard to the latter point, further research might explore in more depth the ways in which such talk links the learner to the task in hand and scaffolds development. The talk is also (potentially) revealing of the understandings that pupils have developed from the more didactic elements of lessons, and ways in which these are reflected in their talk might also be researched. Attempts could be made to ascertain the perceptions remaining with children of the talk they have engaged in – they might be asked to reflect upon these conversations and what they felt they learnt from them.

12.6 Endnote

The observations above offer implications for action and pointers for further research emerging from the study of a prescriptive and externally imposed curriculum for teachers and pupils. The implications for practice, however, have not been spelt out in precise detail here – as a form of 'tips for teachers', for example. I have suggested, in my 'reading' of the NLS documents along with my observation of Literacy Hours in practice, that in fulfilling the directions and obligations placed on them by adherence to the NLS, teachers have little room to act otherwise than they do. Both Mroz *et al* (2000) and English *et al* (2002) have stressed the need, in improving practice, for teachers to have a degree of ownership of the process of change; however, the imposition of the pre-packaged NLS – or 'technical fix', as characterised by Bourne (2000) – runs directly

counter to such thinking. My own experience, as both class teacher and English Co-ordinator, of such curriculum change (see Bird and Norton, 1988, for a description and assessment of this initiative run by the Inner London Education Authority) contrasted sharply to that experienced by schools and teachers under the NLS. The preparation we received involved the school and all the teaching staff in decision-making at every level – from the initial decision to commit the school to such a course, down to rewriting the school's Language[3] Policy[4] and holding meetings with parents to discuss the changes with them. This approach, with which the Literacy Hour has a number of features in common – developing reading with enlarged texts and whole-class groups of children, multiple copies of reading books, shared writing with the class, the use of running records and miscue analysis to assess children's progress in reading – differed from it primarily in its encapsulation of the approach within a cohesive 'developmental' account of literacy development, and reading and discussion of these ideas formed part of our preparation for changing practice. The ideas and research informing these approaches to developing literacy served to inform the decisions *we* made regarding the implementation of particular classroom practices.

One specific example of such classroom practice was the creation, through shared writing activities with children, of our *own* enlarged texts for shared reading – some of which we based upon commercially produced books (these facilitating adaptation and personalisation of the text) and others created around our own activities as a class or featuring stories or activities from children's own cultural backgrounds. Parents provided translated scripts. Through such texts, children both 'write' and 'read' their own 'world', within the sociability of the classroom, as envisaged by, for example, Willinsky (1990) and Moll and Whitmore (1993). Within the Literacy Hour classroom, however, there would appear to be little time for such activities, and although shared writing is part of the curriculum, this did not result in a finished book during the sessions observed.

I would suggest that it is at the level of 'informing' theory and research that teachers need to be involved if practice is to move forward. The National Literacy Strategy, in contrast,

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[3] With the introduction of the National Curriculum, the curriculum area formerly known as 'Language' (including speaking and listening, reading and writing) was renamed 'English'.
[4] Cummins (2001) has more recently called for teachers themselves to be involved in the writing of such policies.

has confined teachers at the level of implementation – through lists of 'tips for practice' contained in the 'Teacher's Notes' and advice and training on particular facets of practice from LEA advisors and consultants; teachers are thus positioned as the 'technicians' to implement pre-designed and imposed policy. Just as effective learning requires the active engagement of pupils, and a degree of ownership of the curriculum – so teachers themselves need to be actively engaged and involved at the highest level if any worthwhile change in practice is to ensue.

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APPENDIX 1

List of Research Questions

PHASE ONE

Guiding research question

(RQ 1) *What is the nature of the language and literacy experiences of pupils during the Literacy Hour; are these facilitating of accepted 'good practice' for multi-ethnic classrooms?*

Focusing research questions

(RQ 1a) What form do teachers' verbal interactions with pupils take – are pupils contributions being 'encouraged, expected and extended' and is their understanding being probed 'to cause them to reflect on and refine their work, and to extend their ideas?

(RQ 1b) In what particular ways do teachers use texts in Shared Reading to assist pupils' reading development?

(RQ 1c) Are the texts used in Shared Reading addressed as having an intrinsic value in their own right – towards which teachers assist pupils in constructing their own understandings – or do they serve predominantly as a vehicle for teaching word-level and grammatical skills?

(RQ 1d) In what ways do pupils engage with the book and the Guided Reading session as a whole – what is their role during these sessions?

(RQ 1e) Do the texts used during Shared and Guided Reading sessions feature criteria identified by Gibbons as helpful for EAL learners in developing reading?

(RQ 1f) In what ways does the Word Level Work link to the text used during the Shared Reading session?

PHASE TWO: Part One

Main research questions

(RQ 2) *What specific ways do teachers interact with their pupils to develop reading; what patterns of verbal interaction can be identified, and how can these be characterised in terms of potential pupil learning?*

(RQ 3) *What perspectives on the reading process are modelled in these Literacy Hour teaching practices?*

Focusing research questions

(RQ 2a) Do teachers' questions 'probe pupils' understanding' and 'extend their ideas' – as envisaged by the NLS Framework?

(RQ 2b) Whose 'frame of reference' is to the fore – teacher, pupils or both?
- Do pupils initiate contributions to the discourse?
- Are pupils initiations taken up by the teacher; if so, how are they used?

(RQ 2c) What teaching and learning practices can be identified within the teacher-pupil discourse; how appropriate are these for EAL learning, and what part do EAL learners themselves play in this discourse?

PHASE TWO: Part Two

Main research question

(RQ 4) *What are the features of children's peer group talk during Independent Work and how can this talk be characterised in terms of potential pupil learning?*

Focusing research questions

(RQ 4a) What are the circumstances of the talk – how did it arise and how does it relate (if at all) to Literacy Hour activities?

(RQ 4b) In what ways does the talk relate to the 'task'
- Sparked off by the task
- Linked to getting the task completed
- Accompanying the task
- Tenuously or not directly related

(RQ 4c) What do children collaboratively achieve through their talk?

(RQ 4d) How do EAL learners participate?

APPENDIX 2

Class Groups

Information was collected at the end of two successive Autumn Terms: 1999 and 2000. In each class, Group 1 is the 'top' ability group and Group 4 (or 3) the 'lowest'. EAL learners are shaded (children's initials have been changed).

2000

Year 2	**Group 1:**	PP, MK, JS, YN, HA, HY, FA, MY, BY, SR.
	Group 2:	SA, NL, HA, AD, DE, YT, AC.
	Group 3:	DH, SH, ME, KR, CA.
	Group 4:	KS, YC, RH
Year 1	**Group 1:**	CM, RY, GN, KC, SH, OD, RI.
	Group 2:	TK, FK, NY, MN, RS
	Group 3:	VN, DL, SH, TK, RE, EH.
	Group 4:	JS, AA, WY, SA, KA, AJ
Recep	**Group 1:**	ZD, RY, ER, NA, AN.
	Group 2:	SN, LB, BG, SP, CJ.
	Group 3:	HB LA, EL, KE, JM, KL.
	Group 4:	LM TU, MW, LR, CT, GM.

1999

Year 2	**Group 1:**	SJ, KN, OR, TM, LA.
	Group 2:	SN, NH, JA, SV, LC, CT.
	Group 3:	AI, TA, JE, DW, MT, DF, ZN.
Year 1	**Group 1:**	PP, MK, JS, YN, HA, HY, FA, MY.
	Group 2:	SA, ME, DE, CA, DE, BY.
	Group 3:	SH, HA, MY, YT, CA, TM.
	Group 4:	DH, NA, KS, KR, RH, CA.
Recep	**Group 1:**	KH, JY, EL, RN, NC.
	Group 2:	CM, RI, NY, MN, BL.
	Group 3:	DL, VN, TA, ME, KE, FK, RS.
	Group 4:	JS, WY, AA, SA, RA, AY.

APPENDIX 3

Observation Notes

This example of observation notes is from a Reception class Literacy Hour during the exploratory (Phase One) stage of the study. It covers the first half of the Literacy Hour, when the whole class are taught together: Shared Text Work and Focused Word Work.

Class	Reception	
Session	Shared Text Work: Focused Word Work	
Text	Hairy Maclary from Donaldson's Dairy	
Focus	Rhyming words.	
9.20	16 children sitting on mat T 'We're going to have a look at a new big book today. Now, we haven't read this one before. Have a look at the cover.' T. asks chdn. what story might be about - looking at cover. P's - 'dog' T reads title Interruption by G.A. to ask T. about setting up an art activity.	
9.23	PAGE 1 T. talks about the picture T. reads first line (1 sentence) to pupils, pointing to words with ruler. Pupils repeat the sentence. This continued until whole page read. T. reads whole page to pupils. Asks P's about rhyming words.	long difficult text for this age group - but does have repetition of text + last line of each pg.
9.27	PAGE 2 T talks about picture again. Emphasizes dog is jumping over the chair. Same procedure as for page 1.	useful EAL point

PAGE 3

Again, same format as for previous 2 pages: looking / talking about picture; reading page through: spotting rhyming words

PAGE 4

Same procedure as for previous pages

EAL learner sitting at back is not paying attention (fiddling with shoelace). T refocuses his attention with a question - asks him to think of a name for the dog pictured. P doesn't respond. T. asks him to come + sit at front. I suggests a name - 'Spot!

PAGE 5

T. reads first 2 lines to Ps.
Asks Ps to find 2 rhyming words - P comes to front + points to 'pots' and 'spots'.
T. continues reading then asks Ps themselves to read the repeated refrain:-
'and Hairy Maclary from Donaldson's Dairy'
T recaps: 'how many dogs so far?'
Ps - 'Three!'
T-'what's a "dairy"?
Ps - (not sure)
T tells Ps 'it's where milk's put in bottles'

T continues focus on rhyming words:-
Maloney - boney Pots - spots
Maclay - hay Morse - horse

1.38

T asks EAL learner what dogs are doing - she answers, reading the pictures.

1.43 T - 'Right, we're going to finish this very quickly now!'
Turns page (large picture of angry cat)
P's - excited comments 'his fur's standing up!'
T - 'whose got a cat or dog?' P's raise hands

* A preliminary reading through of the whole book by me for analysis would give ↙

EAL (and all) learners a better overview + focus - tho' they do pay attention - big colourful pictures.

chan. continue paying good attention

difficult vocab for EAL

Links to P's own experience

	T reads a line then stops to ask more questions T- 'what do you think that cat's going to do?' P's- 'scare all those dogs away.' -'bark at the cat' -'scare the dog' -'I think they're going to fight.'	T involves P's but momentum lost at climax of story.
9.45	T turns Page + stops to discuss picture T reads page all through to pupils. P. comments on the cat - T stops to discuss with her. A second P comments + T. also discusses.	T responsive to P. comments again, momentum lost.
9.49	<u>Final Page</u> T reads final page to P's. Book closed. Several P's offer further comments on book.	*'Focused word work' incorporated in Shared Text work in this session
9.50	T gives instructions for group work activities. Only 3 groups today as a number of children are absent 1- T introduces worksheet with picture of cat. asks P's to name body parts - 'huh - head' etc P's will cut out label words for the picture and stick onto the correct part of cat. T. shows P's how to do this: 'what does 'whiskers' begin with? Jimmy - come + find me the word "whiskers." 2- Worksheet on rhyming word: for second group Pictures to be joined e.g. man — van T tells P's they may have a problem - they may call pictures by a different name so T will help them. 3- Third groups will make pictures of one of the (excluded comments from P's) CARPET SESSION ENDS	useful vocab for EAL learners

APPENDIX 4

Interview (i): Reception class teacher

Interviewee: 'Helen'
General views on Literacy Hour
Favourable, in general, but it needs to be introduced gradually in Reception Year, building up over weeks to the full model (as laid out in the literature). There also needs to be additional adult support for the Literacy Hour – particularly in the Reception year – if group work is to be of a worthwhile nature.

Literacy Hour in practice
Big book session. This is beneficial to all children – stimulating – but the book needs to be of good quality and preferably a 'real' book. There is some very poor material contrived especially for the Literacy Hour. Concepts need to be built up carefully, picking out different areas for attention: e.g. contents page, concept of fiction/non fiction.

Group work. Lack of additional adult support has resulted in some groups being, of necessity, given what Helen describes as 'holding tasks' – which she considers unsatisfactory. Only one group out of the four has really 'worth-while' work in a given day – i.e. the group Helen works with. This year Helen has had no adult support in the Literacy Hour apart from one session [per week] with 'GA' support for EAL focus. Helen compensates for this in the afternoon sessions when more time is available – e.g. last week's 'big book' was on the subject of butterflies and in the p.m. sessions, children made little books illustrating the life-cycle of the butterfly.

Speaking and Listening. The richer and more worthwhile opportunities for talk occur outside the Literacy Hour – e.g. during p.m. sessions when children are stimulated by playing with Leggo, in the home corner etc, there is much more verbal interaction than in the Literacy Hour. Helen has a prolonged 'news' session every Monday morning giving children opportunities to tell their news, listen to others and ask questions. During the Literacy Hour children talk amongst themselves at group time but it is not possible to guide their talk. Ideally, group time would comprise activities set up to reflect children's interests more.

Phonics. A considerable amount of time during the Literacy Hour has to be devoted to phonics. At a recent meeting for Reception and Year One class teachers, those attending were told by the Literacy Consultants that the expectation is that a large part of the hour each day should be devoted to phonic work. The LEA is going to introduce its own phonic scheme which schools have been asked to trial. However, this scheme features letters picked out at random rather than following any sort of sequence and Helen is not keen to trial the scheme, having just started using 'Jolly Phonics', which she prefers.

Ability Groups. Children are not put into these straight away, but during the second term. They change groups for different activities so are not always with the same children. Helen feels this is OK.

EAL learners and the Literacy Hour.
Helen feels that EAL learners in her class should be supported all the time during the Literacy Hour. She gives examples of two children, one new to English (and the UK), the other able to converse fairly confidently in English, though Urdu is spoken in the home. The first child can access a little of the Literacy Hour and can give one word answers to more concrete questions – but when asked about the Literacy hour later in the day, she shows no awareness about what was going on. The second child is keen, interested and appears to participate fully in the Literacy Hour. However, although she knows all her sounds, she is unable to link these to anything – for instance, she will write a 'letterstring' but be unable to read it back.

Literacy approach pre-Literacy Hour.
Difficult to compare as Helen had only taught for 2 terms before the Literacy Hour was introduced. She feels it has helped her become clearer about objectives.

Interview (ii): Language Support Teacher

Interviewee: Harriet

How the role of the Language Support Teacher has changed
Partnership teaching is no longer possible. Previously, Harriet was able to plan coherently with teachers but this is no longer possible. She has been directed to concentrate on Year Two children because of SATs – there is an expectation that EAL children should achieve Level 2. As a consequence, needy Year One children are missing out. Harriet's professional autonomy has thus been eroded and, in many years of 'Section 11' work, she has 'never been so unhappy'. The role is one of modifying poor practice rather than planning for good.

Is the Literacy Hour operated as recommended – or adapted?
In the school Harriet presently works in it is delivered as prescribed, with no deviation. In Harriet's view there is too rigorous an implementation required by the Head Teacher, and again, her professional judgement regarding appropriate learning experiences for children with EAL is compromised by rigid adherence to the structure of the Literacy Hour.

Attitudes of class teachers
They regard the Literacy Hour as not working as well as it should. The directives are too rigorous and there's too much to get through.

Is the Literacy Hour meeting the learning and social needs of EAL children?
Speaking and Listening. Very little opportunity for this – teachers are taking no records at all – not even snatches of dialogue. Harriet ensures that her groups have opportunities for talk during the Literacy Hour and she often takes the Plenary session to ensure children talk.

Reading Development. In this school individual reading has continued and records are kept – children read two or three times a week. The school uses a single reading scheme chosen to reflect the ethnic mix of pupils. Children like it. The big books are good. The structures published material used for phonics teaching is good.

Writing development. Teachers plan a lot of decontextualised spelling work. Harriet tries to modify this, emphasising the importance of contextualising work. Uses a 'Breakthrough to Literacy' type system, word banks and alphabetical spelling lists to support writing.

Ability Groups. Rigid groupings by ability and children are aware of the significance of this (for instance, when Harriet asked a new child which group she was in, the child replied 'second highest group'). Generally, this has produced very bad behaviour problems. However, EAL children are fairly evenly distributed and there are very few at Language Stage 1, so no real problems with concentration of EAL learners in bottom groups (a few are, however, placed with SEN children).

Structure of Literacy Hour. Results in lack of individual help available when needed – teacher can't go and check learning, as she is supposed to be working with only one group. So Literacy Hour is poor at providing for the little bits of help necessary to enable children to become independent learners.

Overview of Literacy Hour – strengths and weaknesses
Strengths. What was previously being ignored is now being tackled, eg confidence in spelling; word building.

Weaknesses. Too much emphasis on the mechanical aspects of literacy. Too much time spent measuring achievement. No longer thinking about building up children's confidence. We're not looking at the *quality* of children's learning but at what's being taught. Now have to satisfy *breadth* rather than *depth* (e.g. genre requirements – myths, fairy stories etc all to be covered in one term). Dedicated literacy time is crucial; children need to be able to work in different groups or pairs if they are to develop social skills but also have time to work on their own. Afternoon sessions are the times when good practice can take place.

APPENDIX 5

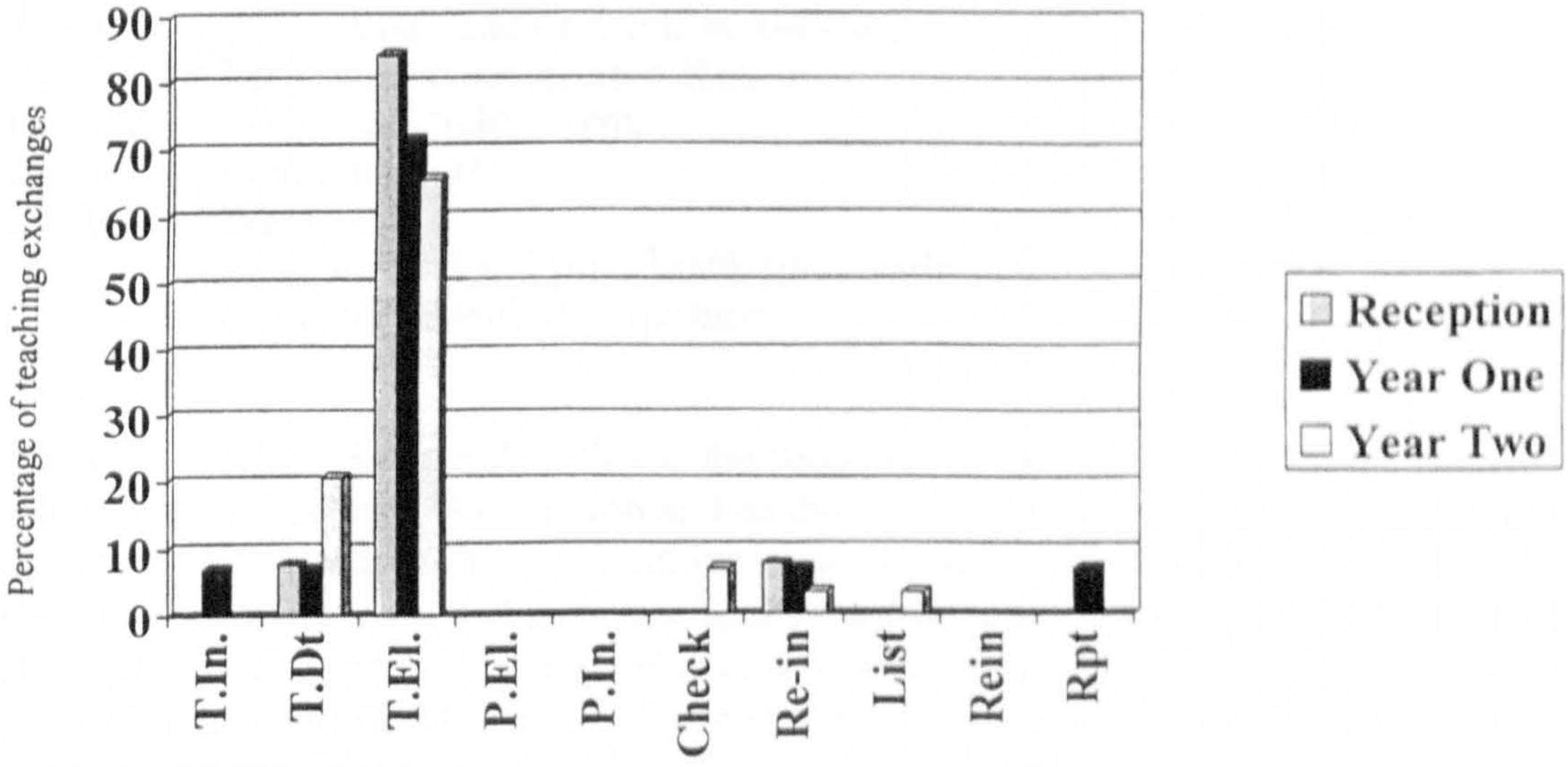
Focused Word Work

The Focused Word Work segment of the Literacy Hour followed directly on from the Shared Text Work sessions. Here, a brief description of the teacher-pupil discourse in each class is given followed by reflection on the three sessions.

Overview of findings

Whereas the Shared Text Work sessions revealed considerable variation in interaction patterns between the three classes, there was much more conformity during the subsequent Focused Word Work segments of the Literacy Hour. All three sessions were firmly positioned within the teacher's frame of reference, featuring teacher-elicitation of 'recall' information from pupils. Apart from one 'pupil inform' in the Reception class, there was a complete absence of pupil-initiated comments. In these sessions, then, the Reception and Year One classes joined the Year Two class in confirming similar findings to those of Mroz *et al* (2000).

Figure: App. 5.1 *Patterning of teaching exchanges during Focused Word Work*



Year Two

During this session, children are being asked to read from a list of words that the teacher has written on the whiteboard – '...words that you use all the time in your writing and your reading.' The teacher nominates individual children to read the words and when the list is completed, the whole class re-read the list together. Following this, individual children are asked to come out and identify these words in the text of the book. Next, the teacher reminds the class of the terms 'upper case' and 'lower case' in relation to the letters in the name of the main character in the book – 'Mr Big'. Finally, each child is asked to think of a word beginning with 'buh' sound.

The discourse follows an IRF recitation pattern as the following extract, taken from the first activity, illustrates. Ken, an EAL speaker is being asked to read the word 'went':

Teaching Exchanges			Moves
1	T	Ken? What does it begin with, Ken?	I
2	**P**	**'wuh'.**	**R**
3	T	Good.	F
4	T	What does it end in?	I
5	**P**	**'tuh'**	**R**
6	T	Good.	F
7	T	So can you work it out for me? One of the words we've got up here that we're using all the time in our writing. Have a look on the board here – can you see it? One of the words we're using all the time. Ken – try and sound it out for me – *just* Ken, please.	I
8	**P**	**Went.**	**R**
9	T	Went! You – and – ( ) you've worked it out!	F
10	T	Let's sound it out together, Ken.	I
11	T& P	'wuh', 'en', 'tuh' – went.	R
12	T	Ken, what is it?	I
13	**P**	**Went**	**R**
14	T	Come forward will you. Thank you – so those words we know and we look at all the time.	F

As in the previous Shared Text Work, the sequence of rapid elicit-exchanges initiated by the teacher characterise this session and enable her to closely control the direction of the discourse. She persists with her teaching point (turns 9–14) after it transpires that Ken already knows the word and does not need to 'sound it out', as he has been asked to do. (Possible reasons for this extra attention may be her awareness of the observer, who has a particular interest in EAL learners. Alternatively, the aim may be to demonstrate to pupils a strategy for dealing with words they are unsure of.)

Again, the sense of the balance of control being firmly positioned with the teacher is compounded by the length of her turns in which she incorporates, in effect, a running commentary or rationale for what she is doing; she thus frames pupils' thought for them as well as tests their knowledge.

Year One

In this session, using a picture in the 'big book', the teacher elicits from the pupils several three-letter words that rhyme with each other. These are then written on the whiteboard and pupils asked to substitute letters in order to make new words:

Teaching Exchanges			Moves
1	P	Ms D –	I
2	T	Shhh!	R
3	T	There's our first word – 'bed'. OK. If I want to make the word – if I want to make the word 'red' – 'red' – what do I do? What do I do if I want to make the word 'red'? I want to see more hands up than that. If I want to make the word 'red' – what do I do to those letters? Amal – let Amal tell us. Instead of 'bed', I want to say 'red' – what do I do Amal?	I
4	P	**Change the 'bee'.** *[articulating the letter name]*	R
5	T	Change the 'bee' to –	I
6	P	'ree'	R
7	T	You're not – your name isn't Amal, so be quiet.	F
8	P	**'reh'**	R
9	T	Thank you – good girl. Instead of 'buh' we need a 'ruh'.	F
10	T	What does it say now?	I
11	P's	'Red'.	R
12	T	'Red'.	F
13	T	Can you say the sounds for me?	I
14	P	'ruh'–'eh'–'duh'.	R
15	T	Again.	I
16	P	'ruh' – 'eh' – 'duh'. 'ruh'-'eh'-'duh'.	R
17	T	And stop – well done.	F

This teacher's style has changed quite abruptly as she moves from Shared Text Work into the Focused Word Work segment of the Literacy Hour. She maintains a tight control over the direction of the discourse – deciding *herself*, for example, which word to change 'bed' into (turn 3). Pupils are nominated to speak at the start of each exchange and no other pupil's answer is tolerated – the one initiation attempted by a pupil (turn 1) is brushed aside with a 'shh'. As in the Year Two class, there is an emphasis on reinforcement of learning by repetition (turns 13-17), and the teacher's former use of 'low control' moves is replaced by more judgemental remarks 'Thank you – good girl'; 'well done' etc.

Interestingly, pupils in turns 6 and 8, one of whom is an EAL speaker, offer utterances ('ree' and 'reh') that do not correspond to any letter name or sound – the pupil in turn 6 perhaps echoing the 'bee' sound in the previous turn. They do, however, identify the correct consonant 'r'. This exercise, then, in its focus upon the manipulation of small units of sound, appears to have caused some confusion amongst the pupils.

Reception Class

During the Focused Word Work session, the teacher elicited words beginning with the digraph 'sh' from the pupils and wrote these up on the whiteboard. In common with the other two classes, the dominance of the IRF sequence during this segment of the Literacy Hour is revealed by the chart. Again, the session is tightly directed by the teacher – pupils are now nominated to speak, and the teacher's feedback move is characterised by judgements upon their answers. However, features of this teacher's discourse style observed in the previous Shared Text Work did carry through:

Teaching Exchanges			Moves
1	T	Another one – Annie?	I
2	P	Sheep.	R
3	T	Sheep – brilliant!	F
4	P	Another one, Nadia.	I
5	T	Um – shoes.	R
6	P	Shoes.	F
7	T	Another one? Jamie?	I
8	P	Shannon.	R
9	T	It *sounds* like a 'sh'.	F
10	P	It is!	I
11	T	'Shannon' – 's', 'h', Mrs D.? *[checking with assistant]*	I
12	P	Yeah!	I
13	P	It-it-yeah!	I
14	T	It is – *well* done!	F
15	T	If I'm going to write 'Shannon', do I need a small 's' or a capital 's'?	I
16	P	Capital.	R
17	T	Why do you think it's a capital?	I
18	P	Because it's someone's name.	R
19	T	Well done – and you're right, it is, it's a capital 'S' – Shannon. Well done.	F
20	T	Anything else – Zaheem?	I
21	**P**	**Spot.**	**R**
22	T	Spot. Spot is – it *begins* with a 's'. Spot is actually a 'sp' – 'sp' – 'sp'.	F
23	T	Um – somebody who hasn't told me one – Lana?	I

The extract illustrates this teacher expressing tentativeness (turns 9-14) regarding a pupil's answer. Rather than simply presenting herself to the pupils in what might be considered the 'traditional' teacher role – as the arbiter of what is 'correct' – she expresses uncertainty in her own knowledge and openly seeks confirmation from others. Thus an atmosphere in which knowledge is shared is created, and several pupils come forward with their own contributions (turns 10,12,13). Soon afterwards (turn 21) an EAL learner offers an incorrect word. The teacher gives a positive initial response in highlighting the correct part of his answer, before pointing out that the word does in fact begin with a different consonant blend. However, possibly through constraints of time, she neither demonstrates in writing to Zaheem the difference in the initial sounds – thus

allowing him to make a visual connection – nor does she check, with follow up interaction, that he has understood the concept.

Discussion

Patterns of verbal interaction

Considered overall, the discourse patterns in all three classes during Focused Word Work were similar to the key finding of Mroz and colleagues (*op cit*) – very low levels of pupil elicits and pupil informs and teachers predominantly retaining control over the direction and pace of the lesson through teacher recitation and interrogations of the pupils' knowledge and understanding. For two of the classes, this represented a considerable departure from the previous sessions. These teachers, then, may be seen as varying their discourse patterns in line with the demands of the particular session – *Shared* Text Work implying, it might be suggested, a more active pupil involvement than is likely to be feasible when adhering to the prescribed curriculum for 'Focused word work' in which:

> *There must be a systematic, regular and frequent teaching of phonological awareness, phonics and spelling...these decoding skills...need to be taught through carefully structured activities, which help pupils to hear and discriminate regularities in speech and to see how these are related to letters and letter combinations in spelling and reading.*
>
> (*Framework*, p11)

The Reception teacher, though, does retain elements of her previous interaction style, as shown in the extract. This is particularly noteworthy since the discussion is concerned with spelling – conventionally considered to be an unambiguous issue. The Year Two teacher, in common with the teachers in the study by Mroz and colleagues, conducted both sessions within her own 'frame of reference' and maintained a similar discourse pattern throughout.

Developing Reading

Considering the development of reading, all three teachers' Focused Word Work linked initially with the 'big book' that the class had just been studying. It then went on to become an activity in its own right and divorced from the text, comprising discrete words written on the whiteboard. These words were not supported with a corresponding illustration and thus depended upon pupils' memory/established sight vocabulary or decoding skills in order for reading and meaning to be attached. Without the support of a wider conceptual structure (a picture or the encapsulation of the word within a sentence, for example) the activities might be considered potentially difficult for some children.

EAL learners

Zaheem, the EAL learner in the Reception class, for instance, was not able to fully comprehend the activity, and the eliciting format of the task, along with the 'IRF' discourse style employed, did not allow for 'probing' or 'extending' his understanding further. This may be seen as an instance of the compartmentalising format of the Literacy hour (with regard to both knowledge content and the structure of activities) exerting a constraining influence on teacher-practice.

APPENDIX 6

Teacher-pupil exchanges: data

The table below sets out the data produced from the coding of transcripts of teacher-pupil exchanges. These were then converted into percentages and used to create the bar charts in Phase Two of the study.

Reception

	T. In.	T. Dt.	T. El.	P.El.	P. In.	Check	Re.In.	List	Rein.	Rpt.
Shared Text Work	**5**	**4**	**21**	**7**	**12**	**0**	**8**	**2**	**0**	**0**
Focused Word Work	**0**	**1**	**11**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Guided Reading	**9**	**22**	**53**	**1**	**9**	**1**	**5**	**0**	**0**	**4**

Year One

	T. In.	T. Dt.	T. El.	P.El.	P. In.	Check	Re.In.	List	Rein.	Rpt.
Shared Text Work	**3**	**3**	**53**	**1**	**10**	**0**	**5**	**0**	**0**	**2**
Focused Word Work	**2**	**2**	**20**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**2**	**0**	**0**	**2**
Guided Reading	**8**	**9**	**27**	**0**	**6**	**2**	**3**	**0**	**0**	**1**

Year Two

	T. In.	T. Dt.	T. El.	P.El.	P. In.	Check	Re.In.	List	Rein.	Rpt.
Shared Text Work	**4**	**3**	**23**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**13**	**0**	**0**	**1**
Focused Word Work	**0**	**6**	**19**	**0**	**0**	**2**	**1**	**1**	**0**	**0**
Guided Reading	**2**	**7**	**13**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**7**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Appendix 7

Teaching Exchanges

Sinclair and Coulthard (1992: 25-31) identify eleven subcategories of 'teaching exchange' – the individual steps by which the lesson progresses. Of these, six are 'Free' exchanges – containing an initiating move, and five are 'Bound' exchanges – with either no initiating move, or else serving to reiterate a preceding 'Free' initiation. They are reproduced in summary below

Free Exchanges

I Teacher inform
Used when teacher is passing on facts, opinions, ideas, or new information to the pupil. Pupils may, but usually do not, make a verbal response to the teacher's initiation. Thus the structure is I (R); there is no feedback.

II Teacher direct
Covers all exchanges designed to get the pupil to do but not to say something. Because of the nature of the classroom the response is a compulsory element...this is not to say that children always do what they are told to do, but it does imply that the teacher has the right to expect the pupil to do so. Feedback is not an essential element of this structure although it frequently occurs. The structure is IR(F).

III Teacher elicit
Includes all exchanges designed to obtain verbal contributions from pupils. Very frequently a teacher will use a series of elicit exchanges to move the class step by step to a conclusion. Sometimes an elicit is used in isolation in the middle of a series of informs to check that the pupils have remembered a fact. The elicit exchanges which occur inside the classroom have a different function from most occurring outside it. Usually when we ask a question we don't know the answer; very frequently the teacher does know the answer. Feedback is an essential element in an eliciting exchange inside the classroom – having given their reply the pupils want to know if it is correct. Thus the structure is IRF.

IV Pupil elicit
In many classrooms children rarely ask questions and when they do they are mainly of the order 'Do we put the date?' The crucial difference between teacher and pupil elicits is that the pupil provides no feedback – an evaluation of a teacher reply would be cheeky. Thus the structure is IR.

V Pupil inform
Occasionally pupils offer information which they think is relevant, or interesting – they usually receive an evaluation of its worth and often a comment as well. Thus the structure is IF not I (R As for teacher informs.

VI Check
At some point in most lessons teachers feel the need to discover how well the children are getting on, whether they can follow what is going on. To do this they use a checking move which could be regarded as a subcategory of elicit, except that feedback is not essential, because these are real questions to which the teacher does not know the answer. Any evaluation is an evaluation of an activity or state not the response. Thus the structure is IR(F).

Bound Exchanges

VII Re-initiation
When the teacher gets no response to an elicitation he can start again using the same or a rephrased question, or he can use a prompt, nomination, or clue to re-initiate. The original elicitation stands and these items are used as a second attempt to get a reply. This gives a structure of IRIbRF, where Ib is the bound initiation.

VIII Re-initiation (ii)
When a teacher gets a wrong answer, he can stay with the same child and try by Socratic methods to work him round to the right answer, or stay with the question and move on to another child. This differs from Re-initiation VII in that feedback usually does occur – 'yes', 'no' or a repetition of what the pupil has just said. The structure is thus: IRF(Ib)RF.

IX Listing
Occasionally teachers withhold evaluation until they get two or three answers. The structure is the same as for Re-initiation (ii), IRF(Ib)RF(Ib)RF, but the realization of two of the elements is different. Ib is only realized by nomination and the F preceding Ib contains no evaluation.

X Reinforce
This bound exchange following a teacher direct occurs when the teacher has told the class to do something and one child does not fully comply. The structure is IRIbR, with the Ib realized by a clue, prompt or nomination.

XI Repeat
When teachers either do not hear or want a reply repeated for another reason, there will be a bound initiation following the pupil response instead of feedback. The structure is IRIbRF.

APPENDIX 8

Transcripts

Year One: Shared Text Work; Focused Word Work
Reception class: Guided Reading

The transcript shows the coded teaching exchanges

Teaching Exchanges			Moves
		Shared Text Work	
1	T	Who can put their hand up and just tell us about the picture – that they can see on the front cover? Wendy? Wendy – what can you see on the front cover?	I R F
2	P	**A mouse is running.**	
3	T	You see a mouse running.	
4	T	Andy – what do you see?	I R
5	P	A mouse running [ ]	
6	T	Where's – who's the mouse running from?	I R F
7	P	Cat.	
8	T	The cat.	
9	T	So what's the cat doing?	I R F
10	P	Frightening.	
11	T	Frightening and [chasing the mouse – well done. [chasing	
12	T	What sort of place are they in? Ella?	I R
13	P	In – in a garden.	
14	T	In a garden – it's a green place, isn't it?	F
15	T	Kate, what can you see in the distance?	I R F
16	P	A house.	
17	T	A house in the distance.	
18	P	Miss D–	I
19	T	Vera – shh – Vera, what time of day is it?	I R F
20	P	**Night.**	
21	T	It's night time – you can see the stars, can't you? Shh.	
22	T	Who can put their hand up and tell me what they think the title says? Freddy	I R F
23	P	Scat cat.	
24	T	Excellent – Scat Cat.	
25	T	Can anyone spot anything at the end of the title? Shh. Karia.	I R
26	P	**Question mark.**	
27	T	An exclamation mark.	F
28	T	So shall we say the title a bit differently, then, with the exclamation mark?	I R F
29	P's	Scat Cat!	
30	T	Well done.	
31	T	Children – put your hands down, put your hands down.	I
32	T	Ok – you know the title is Scat Cat, and you know about the picture on the front cover. Can anyone guess then, what sort of book this might be? What kind of	I

		book do you think this might be? Finding out book? Could it be a story book? Could it be a poetry book? Wonder what sort of book it could be? Caleb, what sort of book do you think it is?		T·El
33	P	Story book.	R	
34	T	That's right – a story book.	F	
35	T	What do – why do you think it's a story book – what makes you think it's a story book?	I	T·El
36	P	Um – it's got –cartoony pictures.	R	
37	T	Cartoony pictures – OK.	F	
38	T	David – can you guess what this white writing tells us? Alex?	I	T·El
39	P	Author?	R	
40	T	It's the author – Roderick Hunt. Pictures by Ben Corte. Rina?	F	
41	P	Um – you know – um in this piece of wood there's some pl – plants are growing in the wood.	I	P·In
42	T	Well done – there are. There's a piece of wood – there's some plants growing – it's a part of an old tree, isn't it. Sit down – thank you. Mae.	F	
43	P	You [ ] that's why it [ ] loud!	I	P·In
44	T	Well done, that's right – so [cat! Cat. [cat! Cat.	F	
45	T	Right, we're going to open the book – shh – and we're going to go on a bit of a – picture walk – we're not going to read the words today – we're just going to read the pictures. Put your hands down. Just going to read the pictures. So we've looked at the pictures on the front cover – let's have a look at the pictures inside. What's this a picture of – Freddie?	I	T·In
46	P	A dog – um – I know about this picture.	I	P·In
47	T	Pardon?	R	
48	P	I know about this because I've been looking at it.	I	
49	T	I can't hear you.	R	
50	P	Um – I know all about this book cos I've been looking at it.	I	
51	T	Oh! That's fine!	R	
52	T	What's this a picture – what can we see? Amal?	I	T·El
53	P	**Dog.**	R	
54	T	A dog in a picture frame and a little – scat cat – OK.	F	
55	T	Let's just look at this lovely big picture that goes across two pages. Let's describe this picture.	I	T·Dt
56	T	Rina – can you describe it? What do you see?	I	T·El
57	P	It's got a – um an [ ] you can see [ ] a [ ] dog and a – a – cat [ ]	R	
58	T	That's right. Right – a big bowl and a small bowl, a big dog and a small cat.	F	
59	T	Where are they children? All together…	I	T·El
60	P	In the kitchen.	R	
61	T	In a room, aren't they? Some people think it's in the kitchen.	F	
62	T	What's this?	I	T·El
63	P	Fire!	R	
64	T	Fire – sitting by a warm fire.	F	
65	T	What are they doing – the animals?	I	T·El
66	P	Sleeping.	R	
67	T	Sleeping.	F	
68	T	Do you think they look happy?	I	T·El
69	P	Yes.	R	
70	T	Do you think they look comfortable?	I	T·El
71	P	Yes.	R	
72	T	OK. Let's turn over. Look at the next picture.	I	T·Dt

73	T	Who wants to say something about the picture? Serena?	I R F	T·E1
74	P	**Her nose is sticking out.**		
75	T	She's got a long pointy nose.		
76	T	And – Kate.	I R F	T·E1
77	P	She's got the teeth in [ ]		
78	T	She has – she's got her teeth in a glass.		
79	T	Why got teeth in a glass?	I I I R F	T·E1
80	P	That's what my Nanny does!		
81	T	Orla?		
82	P	These teeth – um – um –um when old people – um – um – are going out somewhere they must wear – they might have to wear their false teeth.		
83	T	Yes, yes – so they're not hers [ ] are they? She can take them out and she has to put them in water.		
84	T	Where is she – which room is she in?	I R F	T·E1
85	P	Bedroom.		
86	T	In her bedroom.		
87	T	And what's she doing?	I R F	T·E1
88	P	Sleeping.		
89	T	Sleeping – she's sleeping.		
90	P	She nose grey!	I F	P·In
91	T	Her nose is grey.		
92	T	Andy – can Andy tell us about this picture?	I R	T·E1
93	P	Um – there's a mouse.		
94	T	What's the mouse doing?	I R F	T·E1
95	P	Creeping.		
96	T	Creeping – good boy – that's a good word.		
97	T	And Nicola – do you want to describe these pictures to us? No I want you to describe these pictures.	I R F	T·E1
98	P	The mouse is creeping and he [ ]		
99	T	Right.		
100	T	Look at the mouse – is it a very fat mouse or a skinny mouse?	I R	T·E1
101	P	Skinny mouse.		
102	T	Does this mouse look happy?	I R F	T·E1
103	P	No!		
104	T	No, it doesn't. It's very thin, isn't it?		
105	T	How about this picture? Who can describe this picture to us? – Rory?	I R F	T·E1
106	P	I can see a mouse.		
107	T	You can see a mouse.		
108	T	Where, Rory?	I R	T·E1
109	P	There.		
110	T	What's it doing?	I R F	T·E1
111	P	Running.		
112	T	Running.		
113	T	Where's it running towards?	I R F	T·E1
114	P	Cradle.		
115	T	Towards the cradle. Orla?		
116	P	Um – oh – um – the [ ] he's got his teeth sticking out.	I F	P·In
117	T	His teeth are sticking out.		
118	T	Does the dog look happy?	I R	T·E1
119	P	Yes.		
120	T	Does the mouse look happy?	I R	T·E1
121	P	No!		
122	T	Mouse looks a bit – sort of – in a hurry, doesn't it – and a bit worried, maybe – OK.	F	
123	T	What room do you think they're in? Rina?	I R I R	Re-In
124	P	[ ]		
125	T	Keith?		
126	P	I think it's [ ]		

127	T	Oh right – maybe it's got a [ ] Rory? You need to put your hand up Andy, don't you? Who can describe this picture? Andy?	F	
128	P	My dog do like that!	I	P. In
129	T	Your dog does that, does he?	R	
130	T	What does it – what does your dog do?	I	T·El
131	P	Um – put [poke?] his teeth out.	R	
132	T	One tooth comes out [ ] – right, cos they've got long [pointy teeth sometimes, haven't they? [have babies	F	
133	P	Yeah, my dog –	I	
134	T	What are these animals doing – the cat and the dog? Everyone.	I	T·El
135	P's	Sleeping.	R	
136	T	What's the mouse doing? What's the mouse doing? Somebody tells us. Nicky? Sorry?	I	T·El
137	P	Wondering what they're doing.	R	
138	T	Wondering what they're doing – that's right – having a look and wondering what they're doing.	F	
139	T	Ok, next page. I'm going quite quickly cos there's a lot of pictures. There's something happening here – something's jumping out the fire onto the dog's –	I	T·El
140	P's	Nose!	R	
141	T	Nose –	F	
142	T	What do you think happens?	I	T·El
143	P's	Fire.	R	
144	T	Tania – can you tell us?	I	
145	P	It's fire!	R	
146	T	Yeah.	F	
147	T	What – can you tell – that the artist who's done these pictures has made the dog's nose all –	I	T·El
148	P's	Red.	R	
149	T	Red.	F	
150	T	So what do you think that means – it's...	I	T·El
151	P's	Burning.	R	
152	T	Burning – it's hot, isn't it?	F	
153	T	What's the dog doing?	I	T·El
154	P's	Howl! Bark!	R	
155	T	Barking – oh dear. OK.	F	
156	P	Cat wake up!	I	
157	T	Now, who can describe this cat's [ ] – does this cat look happy and smiley any more? Kate?	I	T·El
158	P	Looks sad.	R	
159	T	Looks sad.	F	
160	T	Looks a bit –	I	T·El
161	P's	Cross!	R	
162	T	Cross.	F	
163	T	How does the mouse look? How does the mouse look?	I	Re-in
164	P's	Sad.	R	
165	T	Bit more than sad – a bit –	I	
166	P's	Worried. Worried! Aahh! Ms D – he looks – he looks worried! [nasty!	R	
167	T	I think so too.	F	
168	P	He was smiling [ ]	I	P. in
169	T	Hmm, but he looks cross now! The mouse looks a bit worried.	F	

170	T	What happens next? They all –	I R F	T-El
171	P	Chase each other.		
172	T	Chase each other – OK.		
173	P	The cat chasing the mouse and the dog chasing the cat.	I	
174	T	What's happening now? Tania, what's happening? What are they doing? What are they all doing?	I	Re-in
175	P	Making a mess.	R	
176	T	What are they doing? What are they doing? What are they doing, Minnie?	I	
177	P	Fighting.	R	
178	T	Chasing each other – they're fighting, they're making a big mess. Sit right in front of me now, please.	F	
179	T	What's the lady doing?	I	Re-in
180	P	Frightened.	R	
181	T	She's – she's asleep any more?	I	
182	R	No.	R	
183	T	What's she doing?	I	
184	P's	Frightened. The teeth!	R	
185	T	David – what's she doing? Is she asleep, David? What's she doing?	I	
186	P	**Wake up.**	R	
187	T	She's waking up.	F	
188	P	Miss D! The teeth looks like that.	I	P-in
189	T	Look at the teeth flying up!	F	
190	P's	Hahaha Look! The sock! The sock! The sock's flying up!	I	P-in
191	T	The sock's flying up. Jumping out of her bed, isn't she?	F	
192	P	MrsD! – Mrs D! –	I	
193	T	shhh		
194	P	Miss D – you know dog, he –	I	
195	T	Serena – what's happening? Serena?	I	T-El
196	P	**The lady's um looking where the cat and mouse is and the dog as well.**	R	
197	T	The lady's looking at [ ] cat and the mouse and the dog have gone – well done.	F	
198	T	What time of day is it still, Serena?	I	T-El
199	P	**Night time.**	R	
200	T	It's still night time, isn't it – all this is happening at night time, isn't it? Can we ask Rina?	F	
201	P	[ ] got um his fishing stick and he's now um – and he's fishing and he's going to catch a fish.	I	P-In
202	T	That's right – OK – it's called a 'gnome', isn't it? Those little statues that you see in gardens are called 'gnomes' – it's a garden gnome.	F	
203	P's	I got all of those in my garden. And there's a little [ ] [ ]?	I	
204	T	No, sit down – you can see when everyone else is looking Nicky?	I	Rpt
205	P	[ ]	R	
206	T	Pardon? Sorry? Still can't hear you. The mouse is	I	
207	P	Skidding.	R	
208	T	Skidding! The mouse is skidding!	F	
209	T	Now, we're going to stop on this page. I want you to think about something.	I	T-In
210	P	What does that say?	I	P-El
211	T	Good point, Mae – well done!	R	
212	T	Do you know what we call this – that comes out?	I	Re-in
213	P	Speech bubble!	R	
214	T	Is it a speech bubble?	I	

215	P	Thinking bubble!	R	
216	T	Thinking bubble or a thought bubble. When you see 's' – a drawing like this.	F	
217	T	Mae is right – it is a thought bubble. When you see a bubble shape like that coming out of somebody's head, it means – it's something that they are thinking – doesn't it? Right – and this mouse has just run all the way across this field – and Nicky's right – he's skidded and stopped and he's thinking – enough! Enough! He's had enough of this. He doesn't like being chased any more – OK?	I	T·In
218	T	I wonder what else he could be thinking – if I cover up that word 'enough', what else could he be thinking, this poor mouse chased all the way across the field by a cat and the dog who're really angry. What could he be thinking? Serena?	I	T·El
219	**P**	**He's thinking – 'I'm not going to do it again'.**	R	
220	T	I'm not going to do that again! Good idea.	F	
221	T	Freddie?	I	T·El
222	P	Um – he might be saying 'stop'!	R	
223	T	He might be saying – ['Stop' – stop that cat' – good idea!	F	
		[Stop that cat		
224	P	I know!	I	
225	T	Rhiannon?	I	T·El
226	P	Um – I, I, 'I wish I could trick those lousy – those lousy animals'.	R	
227	T	That's an excellent idea! I wish I could trick those lousy animals.	F	
228	T	Rina?	I	T·El
229	P	'Eeek!'	R	
230	T	Eeek! Yes, that would be a good word – and quite cartoony word, isn't it? Eeek!	F	
231	T	Sarah?	I	Rpt
232	P	Um – 'I wish they wouldn't chase me no more!'	R	
233	T	Pardon? Can't hear you – can't hear you, Sarah. I still can't hear you!	I	
234	P	I wish I – 'I wish they didn't chase me no more!'	R	
235	T	I wish they wouldn't chase me any more – excellent! Hands down. Hands down. Good ideas. We're going to do some more work about thought bubbles.	F	

Focused Word Work

236	T	I'm going to turn back now, right. I want you to look at a page – this page. Look at this funny picture – we all thought this was quite funny page, didn't we? Want us to look at some of the things in this picture – some of the objects in her room – we're going to see if we can find – we're going to see if we can find things which rhyme with each other – things which sound the same. [Look at this picture – what's	I	T·Dt
	T	this thing called that she's lying on?	I	T·El
237	P	Bed.	R	
238	T	What's the colour of her night-dress?	I	T·El
239	P	Red.	R	
240	T	Red.	F	
241	T	Tell me about those words 'red' and 'bed'.	I	T·El
242	P	They rhyme! Rhyme!	R	
243	T	They rhyme. They sound similar –	F	
244	P	Miss D!	I	
245	T	– 'bed' and 'red'. Can you say that for me? [Bed and red.	I	T·El
246	P's	[Bed and red!	R	
		[Bed/red!		
247	T	Can anyone put their hands up and tell us another thing in the picture – Bed, Red. Is there anything else in the picture that rhymes with 'bed' and 'red'? Nicola? Rhiannon?	I	T·El
248	P	'Mat–hat'.	R	
		They're two things that rhyme – that's really clever – excellent. 'Mat' – 'hat' – well done. 'Bed–red'.	F	

249	T	Is there anything else that rhymes with 'bed','red'? Minnie.	I R F	T·El
250	P	'Bed', 'head'.		
251	T	'Head' – excellent – head, bed, red.		
252	T	Anything else? Freddie?	I I R F	Re-in
253	T	Pardon? I'll give you a clue – what's she got lying next to her?		
254	P	Teddy! Ted!		
255	T	Teddy – but if we make it shorter, we could call it a [Ted, Ted, Ted, ked, [red, bed. [Ted [red, bed		
256	T	Let's do some writing – on the board, OK, going to make some words [ ] if I draw a frame like this – my frame – and I'm going to divide it into three bits OK, going to – you're going to help me to write some of these words. You're going to help me to write some of these words.	I	T·in
257	T	If I want to write the word 'bed' – 'bed' – put your hands up and tell me which sound I need first. Sarah?	I R F	T·El
258	P	'buh'.		
259	T	Excellent – 'buh' 'buh' 'bed'.		
		What's the last sound? Shh – what's the last sound in the word 'bed'? David?	I R F	T El
260	**P**	**'D'.**		
261	T	Thank you –		
262	T	The sound...	I R I R F	Rpt
263	**P**	**'duh'.**		
264	T	What sound does it make?		
265	**P**	**'duh'.**		
266	T	'D'.		
267	T	'Buh'–'eh'–'duh'. what sound do I need in the middle, then - 'bed'?	I R F	T El
268	P	'eh' 'eh' 'eh'.		
269	T	'eh' – good girl!		
270	T	If I point to each sound, can you say the sounds for me?	I R	T·El
271	P's	'buh' 'eh' 'duh'		
272	T	And stop. [What does it say, if I cover up 'buh'?	I R F	T·El
273	P	'ed'		
274	T	Ed – just says 'ed'.		
275	T	Can you say that, Andy? Hold on – your name isn't Andy. Andy – I cover up the first sound, what have we got left?	I R F	T·El
276	P	'ed'		
277	T	'Ed', 'ed'.		
278	T	Can you say that?	I R	T·El
279	P	'ed'		
280	T	Put altogether it says	I R F	T·El
281	P's	'Bed'.		
282	T	'Bed' – well done!		
283	P	Miss D –	I	
284	T	Shh – there's our first word. 'Bed', OK. If I want to make the word – if I want to make the word 'red', 'red' – what do I do – what do I do if I want to make the word 'red'? I want to see more hands up than that. If I want to make the word 'red' – what do I do to those letters? Amal? Let Amal tell us. Instead of bed, I want it to say 'red' – what do I do? Amal?	I	Re-in
285	**P**	**Change the 'bee'.**	R	
286	T	Change the 'bee' to – ?	I	
287	P	'ree'.	R	
288	T	You're not – your name isn't Amal, so be quiet. Pardon?	I	
289	**P**	**'reh'.**	R	
290	T	Thank you – good girl. Instead of – 'buh' we need a 'ruh'.	F	
291	T	What does it say now?	I R F	T·El
292	P's	'Red'.		
293	T	'Red'.		
294	T	Can you say the sounds for me?	I	
295	P	'Ruh' – 'eh'– 'duh'.	R	

296	T	Again.	I R F	Rpt
297	P's	'Ruh' – 'eh' – 'duh'. 'Ruh'-'eh'-'duh'.		
298	T	And stop. Well done.		
299	T	That's our next word – 'red' [ ]. You're going to help me to make the last word, now – instead of 'red' I want it to say ['ted', 'ted'. [said	I	T·In
300	T	Who can help me to make that word – what do I need to do first? Put your hand up if you can tell us what to do to change 'red' into 'ted'. What do we do – Serena?	I R F	T·El
301	P	**Change the 'ruh' into 'tuh'.**		
302	T	Excellent – clever girl – well done. Instead of 'ruh' we need a 'tuh'.		
303	T	What does it say now?	I R I R F	T·El
304	P	'Ted'.		
305	T	Sana – could just Serena say the sounds for us?		
306	P	**'Tuh' – 'eh' – 'duh'.**		
307	T	Good girl.		
308	T	Altogether now.	I R F	T·El
309	P	'Tuh'–'eh'–'duh'.		
310	T	And stop.		
311	T	Let me show you, this letter 't'. Instead of going 'tuh' – I want you to try and do this – 't'. *[Teacher pronounces letter without the 'uh' sound]* Alright, so much quieter sound. So let's try again – each sound – ready.	I R	T·Dt
312	P's	'T'–'eh'–'duh'. 'T'–'eh'–'duh'. 'T'–'eh'–'duh'.		
313	T	Stop – well done.	F	
314	T	What does it say?	I R F	T·El
315	P's	'Ted'.		
316	T	'Ted' – that's short for 'Teddy', isn't it Andy? Short for 'Teddy' – 'Ted'.		
317	T	What's short for 'Teddy'? What's short for 'Teddy'? – what do – what can we say instead of 'Teddy' – we can say...	I R F	T·El
318	P	'Ted'.		
319	T	'Ted'. OK. Hands down, sit up, fold your arms. Now children – some of you – you've all got different jobs to do this morning.		

Transcript: Reception class Guided Reading

Teaching Exchanges			Moves	
1	P	What does this say?	I R	P·El
2	T	We're going to work it out now.		
3	T	Want you to put it in front of you to be able to see your book and to use your pointy fingers, OK.	I	T·Dt
4	T	Right, let's have a look at the picture on the front of the book, and one at a time can you tell me something that you can see, Halina? What can you see in the picture?	I	
5	P	**Clock.**	R	T·El
6	T	A clock.	F	
7	T	Do you know what this clock's called?	I	
8	P	Tick tock.	R	T·El
9	T	Could be a tick tock dock –	F	
10	T	It's actually a <u>Grandfather</u> clock because it's very, <u>very</u> big.	I	T·In
11	T	Lenny, what can you see?	I	
12	P	Bears ( ).	R	T·El
13	T	You can see bears.	F	
14	T	How many bears?	I	T·El
15	P	Three.	R	

16	T	Three.	F
17	T	Who do you think they are?	I
18	P	Little bear and big bear and –	R T·El
19	T	Just bears.	F
20	T	Liala, what can you tell me about the picture?	I
21	**P**	**I can ( )**	R
22	T	Sorry?	Ib Rpt
23	**P**	**I can see a chair.**	R
24	T	You can see a chair.	F
25	T	Who do you think's sitting in the chair?	I
26	**P**	**Daddy teddy.**	R T·El
27	T	Daddy – Daddy teddy or Daddy bear.	F
28	T	I can see some little pictures on the wall.	I) T·In
29	T	What can you see, Lee?	I
30	P	Er – I can see a car and ( ) and a train.	R T·El
31	T	Well done – you can see lots of toys.	F
32	T	What about you?	I T·El
33	P	I can see um – a moon.	R
34	T	Where's the moon?	I T·Dt
35	P	*[Points]*	R
36	T	So is it the daytime or the night-time?	I
37	P	The night-time.	R T·El
38	T	Night-time – right. Shall we ( ).	F
39	T	Right – let's have a look at the words on the front of the book.	I
40	T	This is the – ?	T·El
41	P	The title.	R
42	T	The title.	F
43	T	Lenny – are you looking at the title?	I) Check
44	P	Title – there! *[pointing]*	I
45	T	Put your finger by the first letter of the title –	I) T·Dt
46	T	What letter is it?	I
47	P's	'tee'.	R
		'tuh'.	T·El
		'tee'.	
48	T	It's a 'tuh'.	F
49	T	So can anybody guess what that word might be? Halina?	I
50	**P**	**'Time'.**	R T·El
51	T	'Time' – well done.	F
52	T	Right – put [your –	I
53	P	[tidy up time	I P·In
54	T	Could be 'tidy up time'!	R
55	T	Put your finger on the second word.	I) T·Dt
56	T	What does that begin with?	I
57	**P**	**'fuh'.**	R T·El
58	T	'fuh'.	F
59	T	Can you guess what it might say? We might be able to work it out with the last word.	I) T·In
60	T	Put your finger on the last word.	I) T·Dt
61	T	What letter's that?	I
62	P's	'buh'.	R T·El
		'buh', 'buh'.	
63	T	'buh'.	F
64	T	Can you guess what that says – 'buh'–'ed'–'duh'...	I
65	P	'Tidy up'.	R T In
66	T	...'bed'.	
67	T	Time, bed – this middle [letter is a –	
68	**P**	**[Time For Bed**	I P·In
69	T	'Time for Bed' – well done.	F

70	T	Put it on the floor.	I) T·Dt
71	P's	'Time for Bed'.	
72	T	Lana – Lana – quiet voice please! *[to child at another table]*	
73	P's	'Time For Bed'.	
74	T	Can you all put your fingers on the title and we'll read it together?	I R F) T·El
75	P's	'Time for Bed'.	
76	T	OK.	
77	T	Let's look at the first picture on page two – on page two. No – I'll be over in a minute. *[to child on another table]* Page two. Can you all find page two? Put it down in front of you, Jamie, then I can make sure that you're following the words. Can you see page two? No, put it down flat and have a look at the picture on page two.	I) T. Dt
78	T	Who'd like to tell me what they can see?	I R F) T·Dt
79	P's	( ) *[raising hands]*	
80	T	Ooh – everybody!	
81	T	Halina – let's start with you.	I R F) T·El
82	P	**A ball.**	
83	T	A ball.	
84	T	And what else?	I R F) T El
85	P	**Book.**	
86	T	A book. A ball and a book.	
87	T	What else can you see? Have a look.	I R F) T El
88	P	A mirror.	
89	T	A mirror.	
90	T	Ooh! – where's the mirror? Can you show me where the mirror is?	I R) T Dt
91	P	( ) *[pointing]*	
92	T	Is it a mirror or is [it a picture?	I R F) T·El
93	P	It's a picture!	
94	T	Think it's a picture.	
95	T	What can you see, Liala?	I R F) T·El
96	P	**I can see a cupboard and a flower.**	
97	T	A cupboard and a flower.	
98	T	We actually call this a 'chest of drawers' cos it's lots of different drawers. It's got a lovely flower on the top. I can see – I can see a big bear by the door – I think that might be Daddy Bear.	I) T·In
99	T	Who can you see?	I R) T El
100	P	**Um–um–um–baby sister bear.**	
101	T	Where? Lana – share properly please! *[to child at another table]*	I R F) T·Dt
102	P	( ) *[Pointing]*	
103	T	Right –	
104	T	What can you see, Jamie? You get the hardest because you're last – we'll start with next. Can you see anything else?	I R) T El
105	P	Teddy bear.	
106	T	Where's the teddy bear?	I R F) T·Dt
107	P	( ) *[pointing]*	
108	T	Well done – a very little teddy bear. Well spotted.	
109	T	Can you put your finger on the first word on that page?	I) T·Dt
110	T	What does it begin with? First word.	I R F) T·El
111	P's	'm'. 'mmm'.	
112	T	Well done – um – I think Lenny is having trouble finding the first word.	
113	P	I'll show you where the first word is.	I F) P·In
114	T	Well done.	
115	T	Put your finger on it.	I) T·Dt
116	T	What does it begin with?	I R F) T El
117	P's	'm', 'm'. 'm', 'mm'.	
118	T	'm', 'm'.	

119	T	Can anybody tell me what it says? Can you guess? Lenny – can you guess? Say what you think – cos you might be right – I want the word. What sound? It actually says 'my' 'my' –	I R F
120	P	'My [book.'	
121	T	['book' – well done.	
122	T	Can you point to the words?	I
		[interruption of about 2 mins while tape is turned over]	
123	T	Well done –	R
124	T	Shall we read it together? Put your finger on the words. First word – that one there. Together we're doing it, please.	I R F
125	P's	'My book and my ball'.	
126	T	Right –	
127	T	Read it again ( )	I R
128	P's	'My book and my ball'.	
129	T	Can you read it to me, Lenny?	I
130	P	My book and –	R
131	T	No – which word says 'my'?	I
132	P	*[Lenny points]*	R
133	T	And there's another 'my' as well – can you show me the other one?	I
134	P	*[Lenny points]*	R
135	T	Well done.	F
136	T	And which word says 'ball'?	I
137	P	*[Lenny points]*	R
138	T	Good boy.	F
139	T	Can you read it to me, Halina?	I
140	P	'My book [my'	R
141	T	['And', 'and' -	I
142	P	'My book'	R
143	T	'And my'?	I
144	P's	'Ball'.	R
145	T	Ball.	F
146	T	Jamie, read it to me please.	I
147	P	'My book and my ball'.	R
148	T	Which word says 'and' – 'and'?	I
149	P	( ) *[points]*	R
150	T	Well done.	F
151	T	Right – show me.	I
152	P	( ) *[points]*	R
153	T	You show me	I
154	P	( ) *[points]*	R
155	T	– yep.	F
156	T	'My – my...'	I
157	P	'...book and my ball'.	R
158	T	Well done.	F
159	T	Right, who'd like to tell me about the next picture on page 3? On page 3. Liala – would you like to tell me something? Listen – listening is just as important as telling if you listen to your friends.	I
160	P	**I can see the bath.**	R
161	T	You can see a?	I
162	P	**Bath – bubble bath.**	R
163	T	A bubble bath!	F
164	T	And what's this?	I
165	P	**Dinosaur and a duck.**	R
166	T	A dinosaur and a duck.	F
167	T	So shall we try and read that page? Ready – put your finger on the first word.	I
168	P	I –	R

169	T	No – you're not trying – you're guessing.	F	
170	T	Look at the word – begins with a 'm' – so it can't be 'I', can it?	I	T·In
171	T	Jamie?	I	
172	P	'My'	R	T·El
173	T	'My'.	F	
174	TP	'My dinosaur and my duck.'	I	
175	T	Shall we do that again because some people weren't pointing to the words, Jamie?	I	
176	TP	'My dinosaur and my duck.'	R	T·El
177	T	Well done – let's have a look at page 4.	F	
178	T	Right Jamie – would you like to tell me about the picture first of all?	I	
179	P	Um – getting his doll and his teddy.	R	T·El
180	T	Right – he's getting his doll and his teddy.	F	
181	T	So – I've asked you to listen – you're not being very kind to your friends. [He's	I	T·In
182	T	getting his doll and his teddy.		
183	T	What's he wearing, Lee?	I	
184	P	Pyjamas.	R	T·El
185	T	His pyjamas.	F	
186	T	So where is he – um Betty - I don't want to hear big voices – Zaheem! *[to*	I	
187	T	*children at another table]* Sorry. So where might he be going if he's wearing his pyjamas?		T·El
188	P	To bed.	R	
189	T	To his – to his bed!	F	
190	T	And do you think – he's taking a teddy with him?	I	T·El
191	P's	Yes.	R	
192	T	Do you take teddies to bed?	I	
193	P's	Yes.	R	T·El
		Yes.		
		Yes.		
194	P	I don't take no teddy to my bed!	I	
195	T	So can you guess what this sentence might say? Put your finger on the first word.	I	T·Dt
196	P	( ) *[pointing]*	R	
197	T	No, you're on the wrong page. Finger, 'my doll' –	F	
198	T	What's next word?	I	
199	P	'and'.	R	
200	T	'and' –	F	Re·In
201	P	'my'	R	
202	T	'my'	F	
203	P	'Teddy'.	R	
204	T	Good girl. 'My doll and my teddy'.	F	
205	T	OK. Who haven't we had? Halina – can you tell me about page 5? What's he doing?	I	
206	**P**	**( ) the blanket.**	R	Rpt
207	T	Sorry?	I	
208	**P**	**He's getting a blanket.**	R	
209	T	He's got his blanket.	F	
210	T	What else has he got?	I	
211	P	Picture.	R	T·El
212	T	There's a picture behind him.	F	
213	T	What's in the picture?	I	
214	**P**	**The teddy.**	R	T·El
215	T	The teddy.	F	
216	T	And he's got something in his hand and he's got a blanket in one hand and he's got something in his other hand.	I	
217	**P**	**Letter.**	R	Rpt
218	T	It's – sorry?	I	
219	**P**	**A letter.**	R	
220	T	A letter, is it?	F	
221	P's	Uh-huh! Milk! milk!	I	

		[No! No!	
		It's a (t..)	
		Milk! [Milk!	
		[It's a ( )	
		Letter!	
		Milk!	
222	T	Oh I –	
223	P's	It's a post letter	I, R) P·In
224	T	( ) it could be a letter, couldn't it?	
225	P's	Milk! Milk!	I, F) P·In
		Is a post letter!	
226	T	It could be a letter. I thought it [was –	
227	P's	[Not milk!	I
		No! is [ ]	
228	T	I thought it was a glass of milk but it could be a letter, couldn't it? It could be – actually, it will tell us in the words – it will tell us.	I) T·In
229	T	So do you want to read the words for me?	I, R, F) T·El
230	P's	'My milk'	
231	T	So it is a glass of milk.	
232	P	No! It's a letter!	I, F) P·In
233	T	No, Lee, it says – 'My milk – and my blanket', so it is a glass of milk. 'My milk and my blanket.' Lana W. - thank you – you don't use a pen! *[to child at another table]*	
234	P	'My puzzle…'	I, F) P·In
235	T	Wait a minute!	
236	T	So shall we read page 5? Put your finger on the first word.	I) T Dt
237	T	Who would like to read it all by themselves? Page 5 – you've gone on a page – as I say we need to read this page first. Do you want to read it, Jamie? Page 5.	I, R, I, R, F) Re·in
238	P	'Mm –	
239	T	'My –	
240	P	'..milk and my blanket'.	
241	T	Well done! 'My milk and my blanket'.	
242	T	Max – why are you wandering around? Well there shouldn't be pens on the floor because you should be sitting and working nicely – there's no reason for pens to be on the floor. *[to child from another group]*	I
243	T	Right! Page 6. Page 6. Liala, what's happening in page 6?	I, I, F) T El
244	P	**Daddy's hugging – the – teddy.**	
245	T	Daddy's giving the teddy a hug.	
246	T	Do your mummies and daddies give you a hug before you go to bed?	I, R, F) T El
247	P	No, I don't – my mum don't!	
248	T	Doesn't she?	
249	P	My mum doesn't.	I, F) P·In
250	T	No? Give her a kiss instead. Right, Lenny.	
251	T	Lee, can you read this page – page 6.	I, R, F) T·El
252	P	My D [ ]	
253	T	No – 'my' –	
254	T	What does that begin with? What's that letter? Who can help Lee?	I, R, F) T·El
255	P	**'huh' 'huh' 'huh'**	
256	T	'huh' – it says 'my hug and – '	
257	*T*	And the next page.	I, R, F) T·El
258	P	**'my –**	
259	T	'my kiss'	
260	T	So he's very lucky because he gets a hug and a kiss before he goes to bed.	I) T·In
261	T	Who's he having the hug from?	I, R, R, F) T·El
262	P	Daddy.	
263	P	The bear.	
264	T	The bear.	
265	T	What bear do you think it is?	I

266	P	**The little one.**	R F T·El
267	T	The little one's having the hug.	
268	P	And the -	I
269	T	Who's giving him a hug?	I R F T·El
270	P	Daddy.	
271	T	The Daddy	
272	T	Who's giving him a big kiss?	I R F T·El
273	P	**Mummy.**	
274	T	The mummy.	
275	T	And then the little bear says on page 8 – Who can tell me? Who can tell me?	I R I R F Re-in
276	P's	'Bedtime'!	
277	T	Halina?	
278	P's	'Bedtime'!	
		'Bedtime'!	
280	T	It doesn't only say 'bedtime'. It says something else.	
281	P's	'Bed t-i-m-e'	
		['Bedtime'.	
282	T	['My', 'My' – 'My bedtime'.	
283	T	And he's all ( ) up in his bed – and mummy's going to turn the lights on or off?	I R F T·El
284	P	Off.	
285	T	Off – because he's going to sleep.	
286	T	OK. Close your books – you read that very well.	I T Dt
287	T	Would you like to have a look through all by yourself for 2 minutes, just while I look at what the other children have done.	I T·Dt
288	P	**'Time For Bed.'**	I F P·In
289	T	'Time For Bed'.	
290	T	You can read it all to yourselves. Jamie – on your bottom – and you! I want you to read it to yourselves because then when I ask you to read it to me, you'll be able to read it right through. It's not too hard – you've just read it!	I T·Dt
291	T	Go on – good boy.	I R F T·El
292	P	'Time For Bed.'	
293	T	Good boy. *[teacher leaves group]*	
294	P	'Time For Bed.'	
295	P	What does this say?	
296	P	**I tell you – I tell you – 'Time For Bed'.**	
297	P	'Time For Bed.'	
298	P	It says – 'Time For' – 'Time For Bed'.	
299	P	**'My book, my ball.'**	
300	P	– and my ball'.	
301	P	Turn over on number 3.	
302	P	'My dinosaur and my –	
303	P	**'My – my dolly, my bear.'**	
304	P	Not 'my – my'.	
305	P	'my – my!'	
306	P	**I'm not saying 'my – my!'**	
307	P	'My dolly and my teddy.'	
308	P	'My blanket and my milk.'	
309	P	'My cuddle and my kiss.'	
310	P	'My' – 'my bedtime.'	
311	P	**I read it before you!**	
312	P	'My hug' 'My blanket' 'My kiss'	
314	P	I read it before you!	
315	P	No – no – she read it first ( ).	
316	P	**I readed ( ).**	
317	P	Oh! Oh! Boom – boom – boom – boom – boom!	
318	T	Lee! *[calling across the room]*	
319	P	**'My – my – '**	
320	P	Could you read it to me?	

321	P	I'll read –
322	P	OK.
323	P	[My – my – dolly
324	P	[My – my – book and my ball
325	P	[My –
326	P	What's that – what's that –
327	P	Finish! *[Teacher stops class for Assembly]*